

Section 4 – Reports of the Bishop, Vice Chair, and Conferences

Report of the Bishop – Synod Assembly 2012

Introduction

Grace and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! It's a privilege to be able to formally welcome all of you to Kitchener-Waterloo for this fourteenth Biennial Convention of our synod. For the past several months, a hardworking and committed local arrangements committee has been preparing for our arrival. It's been a wonderful team effort and I am deeply appreciative of all the work that has been done on our behalf. Thank-you Pastor Jeff Smith, our Assembly Manager and to your assistant, Guenter Dahle! Thank-you Kitchener-Waterloo Conference and thank-you members of the Local Arrangements Committee for all of your efforts in support of this gathering!

Our Theme

The focus for our time together is the biennial theme of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, Covenant People - In Mission for Others.

A covenant is, in many ways, like a marriage. It's about promises made, promises witnessed, promises heard, remembered and trusted; but it is also about promises acted upon. This is the heart and core of a covenant. It's not about a signature on a piece of paper. It's not the physical reality of living together. It's not even about the presence of a particular set of feelings or emotions. It is our promises and resultant actions that together make a covenant.

I'm sure that we can all recall the primary covenant of old. "I shall be your God and you shall be my people." We also know that while God was, and has continued to be, faithful in acting upon the divine side of the equation, from our side it's been more than a little sketchy, both biblically and historically.

For several years now, as part of these biennial gatherings, we have prayerfully reflected on articulating a covenant for mission with one another, and dare I say, with God. It's been a helpful practice. And in these few days, we will take time to review that plan for mission and also to review a new document, a proposed covenant articulating the terms of the relationship between the synod – us collectively – and each of the synod's constituent parts.

But for now, let me reflect on our covenant performance over the past two years, as I see it and as viewed through the lens of our synod's Vision for Mission. And in the spirit of the coming Olympic Games, let me hazard to provide my opinion on how we have scored on each, using a 1 to 10 scale.

A Church in Mission for Others

As a synod who believes that God calls the whole church, through the Gospel, to be missionally engaged in response to the needs of others, we rely on the gifts of the Spirit to help us develop ministries that will inspire and equip us to care for others through the mission work of the synod, conferences, congregations, and specialized ministries. As members of the Eastern Synod, we have

made covenant to help one another to embrace our vocations as ministers of the Gospel. We have said that we would do this by practicing five missional priorities.

1. We will practice Spirited Discipleship

We have sought to encourage one another to be joyful in worship, diligent in exploring God's Word, passionate in bearing witness to our faith, and generous in sharing the gifts we have received. On this priority I'd give us a score of 6.

In my experience of the life of the synod, conferences, and congregations, I've seen many of us renewing worship through workshops, retreats and church-wide events. I've seen evidence that bible study is becoming a more integral part of the regular life of synodical and congregational leadership teams. I've delighted in the sharing of faith stories by both our lay and clergy leaders through synodical publications and on-line communication resources. I've been happy to see the strong and growing levels of participation in the Back to Church Sunday initiative; and what a thrill it is for me to have the founder of that initiative, Michael Harvey, providing bible study leadership to us during this gathering!

But there have been disappointments, too. Many of our congregations are experiencing a decline in average weekly worship attendance, although it should be noted that some of us are actually growing in this regard. Similarly, very few of our adult members are availing themselves of opportunities to go deeper in their explorations of the faith through parish based scripture and theological study. Most such programmes are woefully under-subscribed.

If we are to have any real expectation of growing the church beyond its currently declining membership base, those who are seeking have got to encounter a community of believers who provide clear evidence that they are engaged in a serious and spirited quest to hold up our end of the covenant; a quest toward a deeper and more faithful discipleship. And unless we are serious about engaging in that quest, all of our earnest talk about evangelism and outreach is really just a lot of busy chit-chat.

Spirited discipleship also involves generosity in the sharing of resources. Here too, we have not been doing particularly well. Let me make the case by shamelessly plagiarizing from Jeff Pym's Generous Giving blog, a much under-utilized resource, as are each of the very fine resource blogs provided by our ministry directors. Please check them out. You won't be disappointed.

Jeff writes, and I quote:

There is no crisis in congregational income. Total giving has increased just a tick slower than the rate of inflation. Congregations have virtually the same purchasing power they had 25 years ago.

There is no crisis in congregational wealth. Whether caused by additions to property and facilities or merely re-valuation, growth in the assets of congregations has been greater than the rate of inflation.

There is no crisis in per capita giving to congregations. It has increased 35% faster than the rate of inflation. Members are giving more than ever – although there are 29% fewer of them. As Loren Mead said a long time ago, "The problem isn't per capita giving – it's not enough capitas."

There is a severe crisis in the synodical and national expressions of our church. The Eastern Synod is working with just over half of the purchasing power it had 25 years ago, and the ELCIC is struggling with an even smaller proportion. The financial crisis in the ELCIC results from congregations sharing

less with the wider church. If congregations had given to benevolence as generously in 2011 as they did in 1997, the Eastern Synod would have received \$860,000 more than it actually did.

2. We will welcome Diversity

Sorry folks. On this one I really can't give us any more than a 3.

We've said that we would strive to meet our neighbours and become more familiar with those living in our communities who may vary from us in age, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, and religious practices. We've committed to fostering a climate of welcome and hospitality and have said we want, more and more, for our church to reflect the diversity of Canadian society. Well, all you need to do is take a quick look around this room to see how effective we've been in this regard.

I've never visited a Lutheran congregation that didn't claim to be "friendly and welcoming." And indeed, we usually are, as long as we're talking about relating to other members of the family. But let's be honest, we really struggle when it comes to breaking out of the rigid constraints of tribe and clan.

We have made some progress. We have done some good work in integrating people who have not traditionally been a part of the North American Lutheran experience. Indeed, our primary growth in the past two decades has come from people whose mother tongue is either Cantonese or Mandarin.

We continue to do some effective work at integrating children, youth and young adults into the life of our church through programs, church-wide gatherings, the camps and campus ministries. But not many of us are seeing this translate into an increased youth presence in our congregations. Truth be told, we are failing to effectively share the faith with our own children and grandchildren.

The sad reality is that, in spite of our commitments, our faces are becoming even less diverse! Despite our better intentions, we seem mostly unable or unwilling to evangelize within the wider community, with those of a different socio-economic class, or even among our own offspring. We seem to assume that the faith is somehow transmitted independently of our own actions. A church that doesn't reach out isn't holding up its end of the covenant and this is a challenge we absolutely must address with great urgency.

3. We will demonstrate Compassionate Justice

Mindful of the biblical principles of justice and compassion, we have striven to work with and for people who live on the margins of society. We've also made a commitment to take better care of the earth, and to play a leading role in preserving all that God has made.

On this priority I would score a very qualified 6. My qualification is due to the very spotty nature of our performance. In those places where the compassionate justice agenda is seen as an indispensable component of our Christian witness, I see lots of nines and tens. The challenge, however, is that it isn't happening near enough.

The good news is really good news! I visit a lot of churches over the course of any given year, and there is a distinctive vibrancy which is present within those of our congregations who are striving to bring an appropriate word of good news to the bad news elements of their communities with

vigour and creativity. Some of this is work that we all support through Compassionate Justice grants that are funded by our partners at Canadian Lutheran World Relief. The many community gardens, breakfast and after school programmes, out of the cold and refugee support programmes supported by our congregations give powerful testimony to the Gospel's call to serve and support our neighbour.

In this biennium, I've also been pleased that we have begun to take up our national church's call to promote right and renewed relationships between non-indigenous and indigenous peoples in Canada. I particularly applaud the Ottawa St. Lawrence conference for the important first steps that they have taken in this regard.

Just last month, it was my great joy to join sixty or so Lutherhostel participants in a visit to the people of the Six Nations in Oshweken, Ontario for a wonderful, but challenging day of learning. Some of you know that my grandparents are buried in Oshweken. My grampa, a Baptist minister, did much of his ministry there after immigrating from the UK in the early 1930's. Here's a picture of the gravestone inscription with his Mohawk name, Hawen-yeh-sowanne – Big Heart. What a joyous moment it was for me to introduce my Lutheran friends to these old friends who were a part of my family's history and of my own early childhood!

Our indigenous friends welcome our partnership. Indeed, many believe that among faith communities, Lutherans are in a unique position because we were not, as a denomination, directly involved in the terrible legacy of the residential school system. But this does not mean that as citizens and Christians, we don't bear responsibility for helping to correct past wrongs and establish right and just relations.

I recall meeting a shoe cleaner named Kidus in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in early 2011. He lived in the streets, homeless. I visited him each day that I was in the city. Imagine my surprise when one day during a conversation about the city's poverty he asked, "Is it not true, Michael, that in your country there are native people who live in conditions very much the same as us?" Imagine my surprise and embarrassment. I hope and pray that our church will do all it can to help address what has become an international source of shame for all Canadians. Opportunities are presenting themselves to us. Let's not pass them by.

I am grateful for the witness of those members who support the work of countless agencies of mercy and justice on the territory of our synod, particularly those linking hands with people of faith across our country through the work of Kairos and Canadian Lutheran World Relief.

And it is so gratifying to witness the efforts of believers who live out this priority by seeking to identify ways in which the church and individuals can exercise greater care of the earth's environment and resources. The pioneering work done by folks like Pastor Fred Ludolph and those who serve at our synodical camps is being picked up in more of our congregations, sometimes in ways that are small, but in very large and significant ways by others.

4. We will establish a Focused Framework

In both 2010 and 2012, we made a commitment to develop effective and flexible structures which will be suited to the tasks to which the Gospel calls us. We offered to be challenged by on-going evaluation of our various ministries, mindful that God may lead us to end some of them and begin

others. We said that we would identify, call, mentor, and equip ordained and lay leaders to meet the challenges that are before us. And here I have two scores to give; one church-wide and one local.

On the whole I believe that the wider church has done reasonably well in achieving this objective. I'd give us a 7.5! I am particularly pleased by the significant efforts that so many of you have put into the process of structural renewal which was initiated by the ELCIC four years ago. A great many synodical leaders have provided bold, yet considered leadership, nationally, synodically and in our conferences. They have provided us with an organizational structure for our church that is well suited to the circumstances in which we are living. The fruit of these labours will be presented to you later in this assembly in the form of several resolutions coming to you from the Synod Council, but ultimately crafted by countless others. I urge you to support these efforts by your enthusiastic affirmation of the resolutions before you.

It is true that our partner synods have not chosen to adopt the part of this plan which proposes synodical amalgamations. It is also true, however, that most of the other elements of the proposals have been supported across the church. I believe that it is our responsibility to act regardless. I am fully and completely supportive of all of the recommendations that are coming before you at this assembly and I believe that there will soon come a time, sooner than we know, when leaders in other synods will be saying likewise. For us today, however, it is time to act decisively and not respond in reaction to the actions of others.

In a similar vein, I look forward to hearing your responses and reactions to the draft Synodical Covenant which was crafted by our Deans and Ministry Directors and subsequently endorsed by the Synod Council for distribution and feedback. The council will use your and other responses from the wider constituency to create a final document which will then be distributed to the constituency in November with a request for subsequent congregational study and eventual endorsement.

It is one thing for us to say that we are "willing to make changes in our organization which allow us to more fully participate in the mission to which God calls us"; it's quite another thing to actually do it! But change we must and change we will, whether by action or inaction.

Significant change is, in fact, happening in our church-wide expressions and it will continue to happen at an even faster pace. Truth be told, many of the models which served to effectively advance our shared ministry in the past, are no longer suitable to the task, or in some cases, even viable. So we need to adapt, and at a much quicker pace than we have been used to.

And as much as we all have great love and nostalgic feelings about our long ago days in seminary, campus ministry, church camping and youth ministry; the present context for those ministries is radically different. We, today, are called to bring as much bold creativity to leading those ministries as past leaders did in meeting the ministry challenges and opportunities of their time.

The same dynamic needs to take place in our congregations. And here, sadly but honestly, I can only give us a score of two! Many of our church homes were established under circumstances that were radically different from what they are now. And friends, a lot of the challenges of membership and finances that many of you are facing are quite easily explained and frankly have very little to do with what you may have or may not have done in the past. It just is. The challenge comes in addressing what we are going to do about it.

The best experts in these questions tell us that smaller congregations who face such challenges – and most of us ARE smaller congregation - have 5 choices available to us.

1. We can grow. Michael is going to help us consider this possibility in greater detail throughout this event. Believe it or not, even today, churches - even Lutheran churches - can grow! Witness the examples of Faith in Port Elgin, Zion in Stratford, St. Paul in Bridgewater and the almost ten percent of synod congregations whose average Sunday attendance – the number that really counts - is actually increasing!
2. We can merge. Sometimes this is the right way to go. I am so proud of the people of Zion and St. Mary's in Sault Ste. Marie who have effectively worked through a very fine and successful merger process in the past three years. Likewise the people of St. David's Anglican Lutheran in Orillia. It's been hard work, but good work; it's been covenant work in support of our common mission and clearly the right way to go in those contexts.
3. They can cluster. It seems that there is an increasing amount of energy being focussed on this option in recent years. Witness the work of the South Grey Bruce Lutheran Parish, Redeemer and St. Ansgar churches in London Ontario, the people of Lunenburg County in Nova Scotia, St. Timothy's and St. Matthew's in Sudbury, the Anglican-Lutheran Parish of the Bruce, or the five Hamilton based congregation who I met with just last week to discuss such an option. Clustering, seeing ministry as something that congregations can do together as partners serving a region or area, is a very exciting alternative that's available to many of us.
4. They can move to alternate forms of ministry. We have lay ministers serving congregations in Massey and Denbigh Ontario and in Rose Bay and Feltzen South in Nova Scotia, each supervised by a pastor who provides occasional word and sacrament ministry. For some, this is absolutely the right option and vibrant ministry can continue and even grow without the presence of a resident pastor.
5. Finally, they can make a choice to die a good death. I think of the legacy of Christ Church in Agincourt whose graciousness in death helped bring new ministry to life. I think of St. James congregation in Normanby Township and Shantz Station, just outside of Kitchener, each of whom made a difficult but faithful choice to conclude their ministries and thereby endow resources in the support of others.

But the experts don't say it all. There's a sixth option which sadly seems to be the preferred option in many instances; and that is to die poorly. To slowly decline and expend every last resource available in a fruitless attempt to replicate an experience in time that is never again likely to be repeated. In this instance, I won't cite examples, but my rough estimate would be that 20% of our present congregation are well along the way in following this latter path. That's forty congregations.

I realize that, at the end of the day, key decisions are made locally. But I also believe that we as a synod, as a people in covenant with one another, we have a responsibility to increase the likelihood of congregations choosing the first five, and not the sixth, option!

In this biennium I have seen a shift whereby this has become the most significant part of the work done by synodical staff. That is a good thing. But it's a reality which, when combined with a continuing reduction of staff and financial resources, necessarily means that some, and perhaps many, things simply will not be done as they once were.

Finally, on the plus side, I am eagerly anticipating hearing the report from the leadership of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary on Saturday morning. I won't steal their thunder, but I do need to say how excited and encouraged I am by what the staff and board team have done in this biennium. They are in the process of developing and acting upon a set of exciting and courageous re-development plans, both physical and programmatic, which promise to significantly expand the breadth and quality of our ministry. Make no mistake, friends. Our seminary is positioning itself, not merely to help us survive, but rather to thrive, in the coming decades! More from them later!

5. We will develop Effective Partnerships

Finally, I'm able to award a well-earned 8!

In our ministry covenant, we said that we would strengthen our existing partnerships and develop new ones. This includes collaboration with congregations, conferences, other synods, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, as well as ecumenical, multi-faith, and community organizations. We said that we would frequently ask ourselves, "Do we have to do this alone?"

Within the synod and conferences, this meant continuing to strengthening our working relationship among the Synod Council, Staff Conference Deans and Ministry Directors. I think that we have all been much blessed by this evolving understanding of a deepened and broadened synodical leadership team.

Good work has been done in the past year toward improving communication within the synod through its publications, programs and communication networks. If you haven't been on the website recently, check us out and subscribe to our bi-weekly e-notes. You can also find us on facebook, twitter and YouTube.

Although the life of Evangelical Lutheran Women has concluded, the ministry of women within the life of our church has not diminished one bit. I am delighted that our synod is able to continue working in partnership with women's groups and networks in the Eastern Synod, and that Cathy Calvin will be supporting those ministries as a newly appointed Ministry Director for Women's Ministries.

This week it is our great honour to welcome Rev. President Paul Moonu who joins us from our companion synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Guyana. Rev. Dr. David Pfrimmer had a most fruitful visit to the ELCG convention in early May and we look forward to continuing conversations on how our partnership can be mutually developed.

We continue to explore possibilities for new shared ministry with the Anglican Church of Canada. It is my privilege to share as one of the co-chairs of the Joint Anglican Lutheran Commission. The work of the commission continues to be fruitful and to receive international attention. Indeed, in April of this year, at the initiation of the Anglican Communion and the Lutheran World Federation, a four person delegation from our churches was invited to meet with leaders of our respective churches in Jordan and the Holy Land to share our ten year full communion experience and to discuss ways that their partnership might be enhanced with our accompaniment. It was a great honour for me to represent you as a part of this delegation.

Finally, and particularly, we especially delight in the close covenantal partnership we enjoy with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada and with our much loved Bishop Susan Johnson. We are proud of the work that our church does nationally and internationally and for the covenants it supports on our behalf with agencies and institutions such as Kairos, the Canadian and World Councils of Churches, Canadian Lutheran World Relief, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Lutheran World Federation. We have been exceptionally well served by our faithful colleagues and partners in our national church!

Earlier this year, I wrote to you and expressed my great alarm concerning funding shortfalls that have negatively impacted our church's ability to do the work we have asked it to do. With our Synod Council, I subsequently issued a challenge for our synod to provide \$100,000 of second mile gifts through the national Praise Appeal to help bridge the ELCIC through this present crisis. Some thought we were naïve in doing so. We did it anyway!

Bishop Johnson, would you please join me at the podium? Bishop, it is our privilege and honour to serve with you. We are so grateful for the wider ministry of this church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada. As a sign of that gratitude and in support of your ministry, as a sign of the covenant that binds us one to another, we are pleased to announce that as of yesterday, the Praise Appeal received \$?????? along with significant assurances that there is more to follow!

Members of synod, do you all see what is possible when we push and challenge ourselves in support of a common task? As a covenant people, bound to one another in baptism, bound together in support of God's sacred mission to love and save the world; we are capable of doing more than we ever could ask or imagine. Don't allow yourselves to ever believe otherwise!

In Closing

I would like to acknowledge the very talented and committed team of colleagues who have served with me in our synod office during this biennium. Assistants to the Bishop Rev. Riitta Hepomaki and Rev. Dr. Mark Harris, who this month takes on a wonderful new assignment for us at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. Thanks also to our Ministry Directors Rev. Joel Crouse, Rev. Phil Heinze, Debbie Lou Ludolph, Rev. Mark Van House, Jeff Pym, Cathy Calvin and also to Rev. Lori Pilatzke who concluded her service to us in this biennium. I also extend my heartfelt appreciation to Conference Deans Rev. Bonnie Schelter-Brown, Rev. Richard Brown, Rev. John Polacok, Rev. Annette Smith, Rev. Linda Douglas, Rev. Kimber McNabb, Rev. Jouko Jyrkama and Rev. Colin Cameron. Each of you has served so faithfully and generously!

I would also like to thank those countless persons who provide leadership in the life of our synod through their membership on boards and committees that administer the work of church camps, campus ministry programmes, educational institutions and numerous agencies of care and compassion. You have given so much to our church, to our synod and to the communities within which you serve! Thank-you so very, very much!

My final words are words of thanks and appreciation to the members of the Synod Council for the wonderful work they have done during this biennium. Thanks also to my fellow officers, Linda Grainger, Keith Myra and Wendell Grahlman for their committed efforts. What a wonderful, wise and generous group they are.

On Saturday evening, we will have an opportunity to more properly thank those of you who are concluding terms of service, but I think it is also important that we take this opportunity to offer a heartfelt word of thanks for the faithful and inspired leadership you have provided during this

biennium. Thank-you for your willingness to serve this community of faith and to lead in difficult and challenging times!

Heartfelt thanks also go out to our outstanding support staff of Cathy Caron, Christine Archer, Stephanie Clayton, and Connie Davison who is now working just down the way here at Laurier. Thanks to Lynn Becker who we miss and are praying for as she recovers from heart surgery. Thanks to Beverley Cunningham who has done such wonderful things with the Eastern Synod Lutheran!

I feel so richly blessed to be able to work with each of you. Thank-you for everything you do to help advance God's mission through the life of our synod. Thank-you for your hard work, your good humour and faithful partnership!

Lastly, and in closing, let me thank all of you for the honour and privilege of serving as your bishop these past fourteen years. Thank you for your very gracious listening. With you I hope and pray that these days together would serve to strengthen the bonds that tie us together and equip and inspire us to follow our God in mission and ministry to the world.

Report of the Vice Chair

Vice Chair
Linda Grainger

"For I know the plans I have for you" says the Lord. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." (Jeremiah 29:11)

I had no idea that serving as Vice-Chair of the Eastern Synod was in God's plan for me. But let me assure you that I am so pleased. In the past biennium, I've had the opportunity to attend congregational celebrations, Remembering for the Future anniversary events, London Conference meetings, the lay retreat, Synod Council meetings and Officer's meetings.

"So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." (Luke 11:9)

Back in 1995, I was asked to serve on the Local Arrangements Committee for Assembly 1996. I served on that committee with Bishop Michael Pryse, who was then Assistant to the Bishop. That was the beginning of my work outside the congregational level.

Following that, I was asked to serve on the Committee for Colleges and Universities (CCUS). I did so for a few years until the committee was changed to Specialized Ministries Committee (SMC). I continued to serve on that committee. Along the way, I also served on the National Working Group for Mission.

In 2006, I was elected to Synod Council and decided to serve on the Legal and Constitutions Committee (something I quite enjoy). At the time of my election as Vice-Chair, I was also serving as the Chair of the Local Planning Committee for CLAY 2010.

More recently, considerable time has been spent serving on the National Implementation Team for Structural Renewal.

I have gained so much – knowledge, new friends and a greater appreciation for the work of my fellow officers, Assistants to the Bishop, Synod Council members, Synod staff, Ministry Directors, Deans, etc.

Our synod is very fortunate to have gifted people to serve, in particular Bishop Michael Pryse, Wendell Grahman and Keith Myra. It is truly a pleasure to serve with such faithful and dedicated colleagues.

We don't know what God has planned for us but I look forward to our journey together. Don't be afraid to ask and certainly don't be afraid to give something new a try. You never know what doors will be opened!

Report of the Atlantic Conference

Conference Dean
Rev. Kimberlynn McNabb

The Atlantic Conference is “In Mission for Others” and wishes to share with you how the Spirit moved in our midst over the past biennium.

The Spirit led us to **Practice Spirited Discipleship.**

- Lutherhostel 2011 was hosted by Lunenburg County congregations. A product of this event was a desire to worship together, which led to a County wide joint Reformation service Oct. 2011 (all parishes participated, cancelled individual services and met in a local school).
- The Conference is blessed with a dedicated prayer group, made of members from each church in Lunenburg Co. The group rotates from church to church, every other week, and focuses their prayer for that particular church, Conference concerns, and the wider church/world.
- Discipleship has been grown as the Conference hosts a yearly Advent retreat. Participants gather around an Advent wreath for a day of worship, reflections, and silence. 2010 the theme was “Sensing Advent”, 2011's focus reflections were: time, obedience, respect, and beauty.
- Lutheran Woman-Atlantic host a Women's Retreat day each spring, with worship, speaker, and workshops. This retreat day is one of encouragement and offering women a renewed sense of being “In Mission for Others”.
- Excitement grows as Lunenburg is getting ready to celebrate 240 yrs. of discipleship this Nov.
- St. John, Mahone Bay purchased a set of hand bells and has a growing bell choir that worships the Lord with every ring.

The Spirit led us to **Establish a Focused Framework**

- St. Mark's, Middle Lahave was lovingly restored into a concert venue – www.stmarks2005.com
- Peace Lutheran, Lower Sackville continues to be used as house of worship as it was bought by Wesleyan congregation. St. Mark's and Peace are reminders to us that focusing on the death of church is not our mission, rather establishing a focused framework allows us to graciously open our arms and offer what we have; life sprouts and grows from turning over good soil.

- Lunenburg County Task Force (made of lay and clergy participants representing each parish) continues to bridge relationships between parishes, asking the question, “What next?” This group is currently hosting lay learning events, including making visits and the distribution of home communion. The Task Force and Conference clergy are talking and seriously facing issues of grief due to foreseen changes in ministry, and are asking questions around clergy retirement (3 clergy retired last year, 2 this year, and others working beyond 65).

The Spirit led us to **Demonstrate Compassionate Justice.**

- Each year Atlantic Lutheran Campus Ministry hires a Justice and Action Student. In 2010-11 the student focused on Bead for Life Campaign, Fair Trade Coffee/Chocolate, Amnesty Letter writing. For 2011-12 the student is an Ethiopian Orthodox man in Development Studies, drawing students from around the world to social justice via a Facebook page, *Universal Network for Global Justice*. www.lutheranstudentsatlantic.ca
- For a number of years Grace, Cole Harbour has sought to meet the needs within the community around the church. They have been working with a developer and architect, and are currently in the public hearing stage with the city. The proposed, Grace Harbour Place, when completed will be a low-income senior’s apartment.
- Camp Mush-a-much continues to offer space for a variety of groups. In 2010 the worn out wooden bridge into camp Mush-a-much was replaced with a concrete/metal bridge. This Spring the kitchen will be redone and brought up to code.

The Spirit led us to **Develop Effective Partnerships**

- An Anglican/Lutheran Retreat for women clergy on the 35th Anniversary of the Ordination of Women was held in Lunenburg, hosted by St. John’s, Anglican and Zion, Lutheran. Lutheran Bishop Elaine Sauer joined the celebration and daily worship was co-ordinated by Rev. Vivian Roberts (ordained 35 years ago, serving with Zion).
- We continued our partnership with the Anglican Diocese of NS/PEI in funding chaplaincy in the Halifax Hospital. We offer 20% of salary for one chaplain and a mutual ministry committee for 2 chaplains.
- A new venture has been co-ordinated with the Anglican Diocese of Fredericton, a “Lutheran friendly” parish in Moncton, NB, the Anglican Church of St. Phillips.
- A partnership was formed between All Saint’s, Newcombville and St. Luke’s, Upper LaHave/Mt. Olivet, Rhodes Corner. Each parish put on the table what they could contribute to ministry; together an arrangement was made and All Saint’s called a pastor, with St. Luke’s/Mt. Olivet also receiving pastoral support.

The Spirit led us to **Welcome Diversity**

- The Conference supports and welcomes diversity through Dalhousie University Multifaith centre. One of Chaplain Clem Mehlman’s interests has been to participate in and co-ordinate panels on various topics (panels include professors, community faith leaders, other speakers). As a member of the Multifaith Centre, Atlantic Lutheran Campus Ministry crosses paths with many traditions and ensures that the spiritual needs of the student community are met as best as possible.
- Camp Mush-a-much offers summer camp for young people and day camps for the local community. On weekends the camp is used by various groups, one of which has been an All

Nation's Full Gospel church (represents 26 different countries) and meets at Resurrection in Halifax for Sunday afternoon worship.

- Hasty-notes were produced with a montage of steeples from all Lutheran churches in the Conference. The artwork was done by Kurt Hansen of Hope, St. John. Hasty-notes are used for Conference mailings and some congregations have purchased packages to use to send thank-yous and other parish notes.

Should you find yourself in Atlantic Canada, either on vacation, to attend school, posted in the military, or as a new resident, please come and join us as we are "In Mission for Others". You will be given a Maritime welcome and shown a good time. For more information, check out: <http://evangelical-lutheran.ca/atlantic///congregs.htm>

Report of the Georgian Bay Conference

Conference Dean
Rev. John Polačok

In the Georgian Bay Conference We Are People who Practice Spirited Discipleship:

In October 2011, the Georgian Bay Conference Fall event welcomed 120 very enthusiastic people to St. Matthew's Evangelical Lutheran Church, Hanover to celebrate 150 years of the Eastern Synod and 100 years of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. Joining us that evening were Eastern Synod Bishop Michael Pryse, Principle Dean of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, Rev. Dr. David Pfrimmer, and Eastern Synod Archivist Rev. Karen Kuhnert. Those who came out for the worship event brought with them displays celebrating their church communities. There were presentation boards covered with photographs, there were artefacts, DVDs, CD's and church history books. The night, however, was really about exploring together where we can go in the future as a church truly in mission for others. The money raised from the evening's offerings went to the Goderich Tornado Relief Fund and to the Kanata Centre. While we undoubtedly will have our challenges, we found that our future will be as bright, with the help of the Holy Spirit, as we make it. We see that light in a number of initiatives that are all about letting our light shine. We have churches like Faith Port Elgin stepping up and taking on a building project to provide the wider community with a building designed to be a meeting place for all people. We have churches joining in an ecumenical Habitat for Humanity Build and some of our Georgian Bay Conference Lutheran Women are undertaking a spirited discipleship Initiative heeding the call to Spiritual Renewal.

In the Georgian Bay Conference our leadership works together to encourage and equip others for Ministry:

The clergy of the GBC are committed to monthly ministerial meetings where we begin by praying, offering devotions and sometimes by worshiping together. We follow this with a time of personal sharing of what is transpiring in our congregations – activities and ministries with which we are involved, plan and discuss upcoming conference events, talk about conference concerns, and "pick one another's brains" open to listening and learning from one another before we go out for lunch together. We have a full compliment of clergy in the conference once again as Rev. Hannes Aasa is shepherding St. Peter's Brant and St. John's Elmwood, and recently Rev. J.R. Bestvater has taken on an interim role at the Sullivan-Williamsford Parish. This past year we were privy to a wonderful presentation on the Holy Land by Rev. David Wunderlich, who had recently visited Israel. I think we were all struck by the day to day realities of living he described for Israelis and Palestinians. As part

of our Spring Meeting (2011) Tom Brook from CLWR provided the conference clergy and lay people with an eye opening account of what is going on in Haiti following the earthquake and the continuing role of CLWR. We hope to soon be launching a group of concerned individuals who have hearts for compassionate justice, providing an opportunity for these people to get together – to find that there are others in the church like them- and through the first meeting or two provide them with the tools, resources, contacts etc. to build this group themselves. At St. Mark's, Chesley the people have taken ownership of a ministry initially spearheaded by clergy, and are providing food baskets for the needy. Adult education and fellowship opportunities continue to be offered in our congregations including: The Prodigal God by Timothy Keller and Speaking Christian an adaptation of Marcus Borg's book of the same name. The youth of the conference has also benefited from the presence of ALSOC and we hope this relationship grows in the future.

In the Georgian Bay Conference We Care about Compassionate Justice and We Are Engaging in Effective Partnerships:

The GBC is teaming with other churches and incorporated local charities to provide a hand up for the hundreds of unemployed and underemployed in Grey and Bruce counties. We are also becoming partners with our local mental health teams (Given in Love Campaign), and womens' shelters providing products and people to help them with their work in an area which is becoming more challenging all the time. We are working to help raise awareness of the unemployment problems, the issues of drugs and alcohol, spousal abuse etc. We are increasing our emphasis on extending hands to Anglican Parishes exploring joint ministry opportunities whenever we can. By continuing to team with local churches and community organizations, we have been able to reach out to people where we have a physical presence and where we do not. We team with the Salvation Army, and others supporting local food banks and food hamper campaigns. In addition, we continue to watch our Conference relationship with the Grey Bruce Chaplaincy Council and chaplains programs grow. We are particularly proud of the Grey Bruce Chaplaincy Council's relationship and working partnership with Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. This has proved an amazing benefit not only to the Seminary and to the council, but to the spiritual and physical well-being of the whole area in general. In many ways it has opened eyes that have been closed or that were simply unaware of what is available in the areas of chaplaincy. It has made a huge difference in the levels of care that all the churches are able to provide. St. Matthew's in Hanover has nurtured a relationship with the United, Mennonite, Anglican and Presbyterian churches to provide an ecumenical Vacation Bible School experience. This relationship has led to discussions on providing educational and worship opportunities around Lutheran-Mennonite reconciliation.

May God continue to bless us in mission for others, in the name of Christ.

Report of the Hamilton/Niagara Conference

Conference Dean
Rev. Colin Cameron

We're making some good progress at the Conference Council level. Like everything in life, it is a work in progress.

Conference Council has been meeting using Google+. While Hamilton-Niagara isn't as large as many of our Conferences, taking over an hour to drive one way for a two hour meeting didn't seem to be a

good use of time. We are able to meet more often and for shorter meetings to keep activities on track.

The 2012 Spring Conference Meeting is a good example of the work that we've been up to during the last year. We tried to find a couple of options that would appeal to people from all congregations across the Conference. An attendance of almost 60 is indicative that we were able to do that. I can't remember a time when a week before a Conference Meeting we had 46 people registered a week in advance of the meeting.

As Dean, I've done two installations—Dean Willich at Good Shepherd, and Karen Jenkins at St. Luke's. I've also been working with the clergy and some of the laity to begin to unpack the restructuring process of our National Church. This process is coming along slowly, but we do have meetings coming up in the two ends of the Conference. I think there is great potential for the church if we find ways to work together for the sake of the gospel.

We are also working on events around Generosity (or Stewardship), more on Worship and on blended Anglican-Lutheran congregations as we approach a National Celebration of the Waterloo Declaration in 2013. A number of our congregations might be looking at options such as blended congregations as a way of providing ministry in the future. We'll let you know more about these events as details unfold.

One of the things that we've tried to do for a while, is get people to send us information about events in their congregations. We've had not much success frankly. A few people have passed along events, but not a lot. We are maintaining the Conference website hamilton-niagara.easternsynod.org as it keeps us in line with the other Conferences. We have also developed a facebook presence <https://www.facebook.com/hamilton.niagara> At the moment, Mike Doan and I are the admins.

After years of struggle in the Conference, I'm finally seeing that there might be light at the end of the tunnel. As we look at the restructuring of the National Church, what makes sense to me is that the Conference is divided into two areas. It is in these two areas that we might be able to finally get to what we've been hoping for a while—working closer together.

Report of the Kitchener/Waterloo Conference

Conference Dean
Rev. Bonnie Schelter-Brown

Kitchener-Waterloo Conference - Covenant People: In Mission for Others:

We Practice Spirited Discipleship

- Hosted two Michael Harvey "Back to Church" Seminars
- Hosted Caring Conversations 7
- Hosted "Areas Meeting" to work on developing new areas
- Monthly clergy cluster gatherings hosted throughout the conference including Trinity Village and WLS.
- Implemented new styles of worship – ie – Messy Church
- Hosted Synod/Seminary Anniversary events including Bach Cantata

We Welcome Diversity

- Maranatha Lutheran Church is connecting on WLU Campus with many groups including The Association of Black Students.
- Several Congregations have affirmed the sexuality motions passed at 2011 National Convention

We Demonstrate Compassionate Justice

- Out of the Cold and Community dinners continue. This year have had record numbers of people eating meals and staying for the night. There has also been an Out of the Cold Benefit Concert.
- Many parishes have gone from full time pastors to part time or contract pastors. The KW Conference has intentionally looked at this issue so that it can be fair and equitable for both the pastor and the parishes.

We Establish a Focused Framework

- Conference Council continues to promote our prayer rota so that we pray for each other in our conference including the Synod Office, Seminary, Trinity Village and Camp Edgewood.
- Many Parishes and Contract Confirmation Camp are using the national initiative A Call to Spiritual Renewal.

We Develop Effective Partnerships

- Signs of Life is a group of four – six Lutheran churches that are in a small geographical area and have started intentionally working together. Some ways that we come together are in worship team exchanges, Sunday School supports, youth, and we have also hosted a “Nurturing Generous Giving” Seminar (Jeff Pym).
- Youth and Young Adult Programs
- Hosted a “Medieval Feast” Fundraiser in support of Camp Edgewood’s new development.
- When discussion started regarding the new areas, an attitude of excitement and new possibilities started to emerge and churches in the conference have already started talking and working together.
- Mennonite / Lutheran dialogue sessions.

The Kitchener-Waterloo Conference continues to be a vibrant, exciting place that works well together. We strive to be a church in mission for others.

Report of the London Conference

Conference Dean
Rev. Richard Brown

Highlights of ministry in the London Conference over the past biennium:

We Practice Spirited Discipleship

- Fall 2010 - London Conference hosted for the first time “Back to Church Sunday” services.

- 2010 Conference Fall Event at Trinity Windsor: Worship Practices Dialogue / Synod & Seminary Anniversary Celebrations [Rev. Karen Kuhnert].
- 2011 Conference Spring Business Meeting and Event at Bethany Woodstock: Singing Global Song in a Canadian Church Context [Debbie Lou Ludolph with the Inshallah Choir].
- 2011 Conference Fall Event at St. John's Aylmer: An Interfaith Dialogue with Our Muslim Neighbours [Imam Shafiq Hudda, Islamic Humanitarian Service; Kitchener; Dr. Idrisa Pandit, Studies in Islam, Renison University College, University of Waterloo; Rev. Tim Hegedus, Associate Professor of New Testament, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary].
- 2012 Conference Spring Business Meeting and Event at St. Paul's Leamington: Back To Church Sunday [Michael Harvey].
- Monthly clergy cluster gatherings hosted throughout the conference.
- Monthly ecumenical / ministerial meetings.
- Support WLS: Rota teams, internship sites (Zion Stratford & Trinity Tavistock), and contextual placement sites.
- Embracing technology in worship practices.
- Laity nursing home ecumenical worship services.
- Clergy and laity contributions to the annual Conference Advent Devotion Booklets.
- Laity and pastors serving on community, conference, synodical, and national boards and committees.
- Continued congregation "Back to Church Sunday" services.
- Congregational anniversary celebrations (St. Peter's Zurich ~ 150th); (Trinity Tavistock ~ 180th).
- Conference donations to help sponsor students for mission trips.

We Welcome Diversity

- Ecumenical Vacation Bible School.
- Support campus ministry.
- Support community youth events.

We Demonstrate Compassionate Justice

- Community service projects.
- Islam study series.
- ALSOC (Anglican Lutheran Stewards of Creation ~ youth group that focuses on worship and environment practices).
- Community clothing exchange.
- Congregational affirmations of National Convention sexuality motions.
- Accessibility / greening of buildings projects.
- Conference Caring Conversations Event at Zion Stratford (April 14, 2012).

We Establish a Focused Framework

- Yearly confirmation camp and retreats.
- Call to Spiritual Renewal endeavors.
- Collaborative parish ministries.

We Develop Effective Partnerships

- Multiple parish confirmation programs.
- Lutheran Women 2011 Fall Conference Event.
- Support of CLWR.
- Ecumenical clergy clusters/ministerials.

- Anglican / Lutheran Full Communion Celebration Service (10 yr.) at Zion Stratford.
- Mennonite / Lutheran dialogue sessions.
- Ecumenical Lenten services

The London Conference:

- We welcomed Rev. Nadine Schroeder-Kranz (St. Peter's Zurich); Rev. Richard Schwass (St. Peter's Milverton); Rev. Heather Spencer and Rev. David Wirt (Redeemer & St. Ansgar London).
- We said goodbye to Rev. Elina Salonen, Rev. Ed Bastian, and Rev. Helen Toman.
- We remembered the passing of Rev. Art Horst and Rev. Judi Williams.
- We congratulated Jim Garey (retirement).
- We give thanks to Rev. Dick Holm, Rev. Bob Hutchison, Rev. Bob Zimmerman, Rev. Thomas Mertz and Rev. Daniela Mertz for their completed interims.
- We give thanks to Rev. Thomas Mertz, Rev. John Goldsworthy, Rev. Steve Johnston, Tracy Lather, Dwight Upton, and Eunice Kropf for their contributions as Conference Council members.
- We will look at future collaborative ministry endeavors with other area ELCIC congregations and with other denominations.
- We will look at ways to support our retired rostered members.
- We will look at the issues related to declining congregations.
- We will look at Spiritual Renewal practices as a conference.
- We will look at offering a rostered leadership retreat.
- We will look at educational events beyond the regular spring / fall events.
- We will look at the implementation of synodical restructuring strategies.
- We will look at the sponsorship of a rural ministry education event.

We are a Conference that is *"In Mission for Others!"*

Report of the Northern Conference

Conference Dean
Rev. Jouko Jyrkama

The Northern Conference covers a lot of territory in Northern Ontario. Its nine active congregations are spread over an area interestingly forming a shape of a cross, Sudbury (Trinity, St Timothy's, St Matthew's) at its center, North Bay (Redeemer) in the east, Sault Ste. Marie (Zion), Elliot Lake (Faith) and Massey (Zion) in the west, Timmins/South Porcupine (St John's) in the north and Magnetawan (St Paul's) in the south.

The fact that we are living so far apart from each other is posing challenges to our co-operation, yet we try to support each other's ministry and mission as best as we can under these circumstances. Normally we meet once a year at our conference spring meetings that are held in different locations, in 2011 in Timmins/South Porcupine and in 2012 in Elliot Lake. Our meetings are held from Friday to Saturday which gives us more time for worshipping together as well as for sharing and discussing our common issues. Last August we gathered as a conference at Trinity, Sudbury to celebrate the Seminary and Synod's Anniversaries.

This past biennium has marked significant changes in many of our congregations. Since the last Synod Assembly we have welcomed 5 new pastors to our conference: pastors Glenda Morrissette to St John's, Jun Gao to St Paul's, Kristin Luana and Olaf Baumann and Vihtori Leskela to St Timothy's / St Matthew's. Also, pastor Thomas Zumbrock is back in the conference area serving Faith, Elliot

Lake and Zion, Massey as an interim pastor. That means that all our pastoral vacancies are at least for the time being filled. Thanks be to God!

In addition to the merger between Zion and St Mary's in the Sault at the end of 2010, the changes in pastoral staff have brought along new cultural diversity and other interesting developments to our congregations.

St John's, originally a Finnish congregation, called a pastor whose first language is English, St Paul's, Magnetawan, is served now by a Chinese pastor and St Matthew's and St Timothy's that decided to begin a shared ministry partnership are served by pastors whose cultural background is Hawaiian, German and Finnish.

Because of the challenges that the long distances between our congregations pose to our co-operation and partnerships on the conference level, many congregations have developed meaningful partnerships with the local churches from other denominations.

As to meaningful partnerships, it is also good to mention that because of the changes in some of the originally Finnish congregations of our conference, the Suomi Conference of Canada has become an important partner in supporting and organizing the Finnish language ministry in such congregations that don't have a Finnish speaking pastor any more.

Having so many new pastors with fresh new ideas in our conference and the changes that have taken place, as well as the new beginnings in many of the congregations makes the future of our conference look brighter again. Despite the geographical distances between our congregations, we feel that we belong together and will continue to find new ways to support each other in our joint ministry of witnessing to our risen Lord and serving people in our communities as we are called to be in Mission for others.

Report of the Ottawa/St Lawrence Conference

Conference Dean
Rev. Annette Smith

Covenant People: In Mission for Others

The word "covenant" implies more than a mere promise. It encourages an on-going relationship that brings with it both challenges and opportunities.

The Ottawa/St. Lawrence Conference, in its four clusters, has sought God's Spirit and blessing as we live out our calling and covenant as God's people here.

ANNUAL GATHERINGS

In 2011 the Conference gathered and listened to the voices of our aboriginal brothers and sisters. Cindy Blackstock spoke powerfully about aboriginal education and the need to support efforts so that all Canadian children receive quality materials, teachers and school facilities. Our brothers and sisters from Turtle Island brought us reflections of experiences in residential schools in story and quilt form. KAIROS joined the conversation and shared the vision of full endorsement by our government of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Banners were created to join the Roll with the Declaration Event on Parliament Hill in June 2011.

Motions of support were crafted and forwarded to the ELCIC Convention 2011.

In 2012 we gathered for “A Conference Call” and centered our day in the Call to Spiritual Renewal. We studied, worshipped, prayed, celebrated our service, our on-going witness and support of the ELCIC through The Praise Appeal and the structural renewal process.

CLUSTER MINISTRY

OTTAWA has begun a regular clergy gathering for fellowship and sharing. St. John’s celebrated its 115th Anniversary in 2010. They continue to be involved in the Christian Council of the Capital Region.

MONTREAL continues to celebrate faith at their annual worship and picnic. They gathered to celebrate the 25th anniversary of ordination of Rev. Eric Dyck, and began a new relationship with the Presbyterian Church through a seniors’ facility and worship space in St. Lambert. The Latvian church in Montreal is seeking a shared ministry with the Ottawa Latvian community.

THE SEAWAY holds regular clergy gatherings, and, most recently has invited neighbouring clusters to their annual clergy retreat at Lutherlyn Camp and Conference Centre. A wonderful time of learning and sharing. In 2011 they welcomed Dr. Tim Hegedus as speaker. Bishop Mike also dropped in for some sharing time.

THE OTTAWA VALLEY clergy meet monthly and have continued their shared ministry in the areas of Marriage Preparation, and Lenten Worship Rotation. A Family Faith Day in partnership with Lutherlyn has been discussed! We celebrated the Synod/Seminary Anniversary in May 2010 with a worship and banquet evening at Zion, Pembroke.

The Grace Institute was born in 2012, offering educational webinars for clergy and lay in a local setting and at reasonable cost. Preaching, Bible Study, Youth Ministry are some of the webinars offered so far in partnership with Luther Seminary and Princeton Seminary. “Radical Christianity” a webinar conference will be held in November 2012 with keynote speaker Joan Chittister OSB and in partnership with Trinity Institute, Wall Street, New York.

LUTHERLYN CAMP AND CONFERENCE CENTRE continues to work toward facilities improvement and now has enough funds raised to begin the rebuilding of the Schmieder Hall washroom and shower facilities. They have a brand new website and are engaging with potential partners in ministry and program development.

WELCOMES AND FAREWELLS

We welcomed several new pastors into our midst this biennium:

Rev. James Slack Jr: Christ the Redeemer (Dollard des Ormeaux)

Rev. Mei Sum Lai: Resurrection (Orleans)

Rev. Cathy McCaig: St. James Lutheran/St. Paul’s Anglican (Renfrew)

Rev. Adam Snook: Christ/St. Stephen’s (Maynooth/Schutt)

Rev. Friedrich Demke: Martin Luther German (Ottawa)

We look forward to celebrating with Faith, Nepean; Good Shepherd, Brockville; St. Mark’s, Kingston and Zion, Pembroke in the near future as they are all in the call process. We have bid farewell to Rev. Carey Meadows Helmer; Rev. Lori Pilatzke, Rev. Heather Spencer and wished a blessed retirement to Rev. Diane Raddatz; and Rev. Bonnie Scharf (again).

THANK YOU

A gracious and heartfelt “thank you” to those who have served on the OSL Conference Council through this biennium: Bev Mathesius, Robert Pierce, Rev. Samuel King-Kabu, Bianca Tessier, Rev. Charlie Nolting, Megan Olson and Evelyn Swanson. We look forward to welcoming some new members following our Conference meeting.

Report of the Toronto Conference

Conference Dean
Rev. Linda Douglas

Engaging both lay members and clergy of the Toronto Conference, encouraging participation in Conference events is one of our greatest challenges, especially for a new dean. Our Fall Conference of 2010 was a youth event, with presentations and workshops led by Shane Claiborne, a founding member of “The Simple Way.”

Fran Schmidt, our ELCIC missionary in Peru, shared her experiences with a slide show and talked about her work and the needs of the people she is serving. We held our annual Epiphany Concert in January, 2011. The proceeds from the concert were designated to Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. Due to decline in participants and audience, it was decided that we would try something different, a Lutheran Culture event that would showcase our diversity using worship, food, arts, crafts and music.

Our 2011 Fall Conference was a Health Fair with speakers, presenters and displays from a variety of Health Organizations and Services addressing the needs of an aging population. There were speakers and presenters from Parish Nursing, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, CCAC, Diabetes Society, Canadian Cancer, Ovarian Cancer, TENA (incontinence), and a few others.

At our 2011 Spring meeting, we invited pastors in Special Ministries to tell us about the work they are doing outside of congregational ministry. Those asked to share their experiences appreciated the recognition.

We celebrated our Synod’s 150th Anniversary on September 25th at Zion, Maple where our Synod was born. The attendance, both clergy and lay was outstanding. Part of our goal for the worship service was to show the diversity of our conference, probably the most diverse in North America. The Rhenish Church youth band played the Gathering Music. The Latvian Choir from St. Andrew’s sang during communion. We had readings and prayers in German, Finnish, Latvian, French, Cantonese, Swedish, Mandarin, and English. The hymns showcased the global element of Lutheran hymnody. We asked our congregations to create a pennant/banner showing the congregation’s name, date established, and something that demonstrated their mission or focus. Twenty-four pennants were displayed across the back of the church. We also produced a history book with pictures and the stories of our congregations, their successes and struggles. The offering was designated to our Synod.

In the past, our ministerial participation has often been low. Over the past two years, this has been improving. We had Pastor Mark Harris come and speak to us on sharing resources (35 clergy attended), we had a one day retreat, we chose a book to read and discuss over several meetings, we had a day of dreaming and visioning where we made a covenant to meet for the next three months to pray, break bread, and share (a three-hour event). Our pastors are developing better and stronger relationships, allowing themselves to be more vulnerable to one another, trusting, open

and supportive. We travelled to Orillia to see and learn how a Lutheran-Anglican congregation does ministry. We have discussed restructuring, filling out a survey at our ministerial and forwarding the feedback to Synod office. We had two meetings to deal with the new areas that will replace our conference. As diverse as we are, we are working better together as we grow more appreciative of our differences discovering common ground in our Lutheran faith.

We started a “Theological Reflection” group which is now in its second year. A small group of pastors meet once a month to discuss events in their lives and/or congregations and talk about where God is in these situations. The group has leader, a pastor working on a doctorate in counselling. Those who have been coming have found this to be very meaningful and supportive. A second group is in the process of being formed.

Some of our Lutheran pastors took part in the worship service that was part of the Creche Convention (Friends of the Creche) in Toronto. This was held at St. James Anglican Cathedral. There were hundreds of creches on display, many rare and historical.

A number of our congregations support the work of the Olive Branch for Children in Tanzania as part of their call to be In Mission for Others. Several lay people and one pastor have volunteered their vacation time to work in Tanzania on various projects, including schools, HIV patients, and agriculture.

We extend our thanks and gratitude to those who serve on our Conference Council: Judy Baribeau (Secretary/Treasurer), Esther Au, Rev. Susan Climo, Rev. Mark Van House, Rev. David Tin, Rev. Gigi Young, and Rev. Roy Thakurdial.