



Lutherans, Methodists celebrate full communion accord

Earlier this year, members of the ELCA and the United Methodist Church (UMC) in New England celebrated an event 30 years in the making – the signing of a “full communion agreement” between the two denominations.

In 2009, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly voted 958- 51 to adopt a “full communion” agreement with the UMC. United Methodists also gave their overwhelming approval to the agreement by an 864-19 vote in 2008.

Sanctuary, Marshfield, Mass., connects with Methodists

An exciting relationship fostered by this agreement is the ministry of Sanctuary, Marshfield, Mass., which is evolving into a joint Lutheran / Methodist mission start. Sanctuary began just over a year ago as our new ELCA mission congregation on the South Shore of Boston. Since that time the ministry in Marshfield has grown to include the partnership and support of many nearby Lutheran congregations, as well as a connection to the Methodist community in Marshfield and Scituate, Mass.

“Thanks to the gifts brought by both Lutherans and Methodists, Sanctuary has been given a church building of its own on the main street of Marshfield with a thriving preschool, deep community connections, and a group of people passionate about the incredible work of the Spirit that is stirring on the South Shore,”

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Bishop Margaret G. Payne (left) of the New England Synod, ELCA, and Bishop Peter D. Weaver of the New England Conference, United Methodist Church (UMC), recognize the full communion agreement between the ELCA and the UMC in a joint worship celebration service in April at Trinity, Worcester, Mass. Hundreds of Lutherans and United Methodists attended. (NEUMC photo by Alexx Wood)

Synod ends publication of *The Link*

This is the last issue of *The Lutheran Link*, the magazine created in 2002 to link congregations to each other and to the work of the New England Synod. As of this issue, the synod moves away from print communication to what's now being called “social media.” This means you'll now be learning via other sources – the synod website, email, Constant Contact and Twitter – about all the exciting ways people and congregations in the synod are fulfilling our commitment to justice.

We still feel print is important. Unfortunately, decreasing mission support from our congregations in these troubling times means we must rely on more economical ways to tell the story of God's saving grace and how we have experienced it in our lives.

We are grateful for the vital ministry of *The Link*, which can trace its roots back to 1948 when the New England Conference of the Augustana Lutheran Church published its first newspaper. Well done, good and faithful servant.

Contact us

Do you have a question or comment about something you've read in this issue? Or do you have a story for the website? Contact Sister Virginia Strahan, at 508-791-1530 x103 or sisterv@nesynod.org.

2011 synod assembly unlike any other

Not only will the 2011 synod assembly be held mid-day Friday through mid-day Sunday, June 3-5, it will offer a full day of service projects in Springfield, Mass., a diverse urban setting. Projects will range

from carpentry to knitting prayer shawls. Called “Doing What Matters,” we will focus on our commitment to justice. Learn more at <http://www.newenglandsynod.org/events/synod-assembly>.

From the Bishop – The Missing Link

It seemed like an assignment that could be done quickly, especially when so many other assignments and appointments were competing for my attention – write the last bishop’s column for the last **Lutheran Link**. But when I sat down with my pile of all the **Links** that have ever been printed, the assignment turned into a memorable and misty stroll through most of the years that I have served as bishop.

So many people who have served in the synod and then moved or retired or passed into the Church Triumphant, so many inspiring assembly speakers, so many current happenings explored and explained, so many stories of congregations doing God’s work, so many funny and sad and powerful articles.

In the early years of **The Link**, there were gorgeous colored pictures – my favorites were the children and the stained glass windows and the mission work and the capturing of amazing moments.

It was a source of uncharacteristic Lutheran pride to spend extra time with our award-winning issue of November/December 2004. Reading through it, I reminisced about my trip to the Taizé Community with young adults from the synod, read about a ministry to the homeless, remembered Pr. Burt Strand and others who share Red Sox mania, and read an article by Amanda Nelson about the Northeast Lutheran Student Movement. At the time, she was a sophomore at Wheaton College, and this October I saw her in Chicago. Now she is a first year student at the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and was there to receive a scholarship from the ELCA Fund for Leaders in Mission. She is on her way to being an ordained pastor, and moments of her journey are in **The Link**.

At the risk of sounding like someone who does not use, enjoy and continue to be amazed at the marvels of modern technology, I mourn the passing of the printed **Link**. It would not have been the same to sit down at a screen and scroll through pages of text and pictures. My own spirituality is highly connected to



**Bp. Margaret G. Payne
and friend from Namibia**

experiences of the senses – watching a flickering candle, kneading bread, digging in soil, smelling incense, and turning the pages of well-worn books that have been my friends and spiritual guides for years. I can read scriptural texts on my computer screen, but nothing stirs my spirit as much as reading them from the white bible with a zipper around the edges that my mother and father gave me as a confirmation gift.

I am still going to be writing to you; my musings that are most like my columns in **The Link**

can be found on my blog, so please check it once in a while. There will be weekly stories and pictures on the synod website that can reach even more people than before with their accounts of the lives of individuals and faith communities in New England that are witnessing in remarkable ways to Jesus.

Perhaps **The Link** too often sat untouched and unread in many places, and so for the sake of a wider audience and because of limited financial resources, this is the last printed issue. I thank God for the way in which we were kept connected by it, and I thank all the many people who contributed to it. Most of all, I am grateful to Sister Virginia Strahan, who worked hours longer than anyone imagined, brought her wonderful editing and writing skills to this labor of love, and insisted on excellence in every issue.

Now we move on to the next chapter in communications. But I must confess that I am among those who love paper and print and the way that I could glance at **The Link** on my desk without having to turn on a computer. I will miss its touch and look and witness. I send my prayers and thanks to all of you who have shared my love of this way of keeping in touch and staying linked. And behind the scenes, I will be a tireless advocate for keeping print alive because my love affair with it will never end.

**“... my love affair with
(print) will never end.”**

Bishop joins Resurrection, Roxbury, Mass.

Bp. Margaret G. Payne has joined Resurrection, Roxbury, Mass., for the coming year. This is the fifth urban/multicultural congregation she and her husband John have joined since she was re-elected in 2006. Each year in a different place, the Bishop spends time finding out about the ministry, worshipping there when she can, helping with planning and giving her monthly pledge.

“If you think you have it tough, you should see the challenges these congregations face,” she commented in her blog. “I have discovered the Spirit stirring in me when I go outside my own comfort zone and connect to a place where God is at work in a setting that both cries out for accompaniment and also announces the kingdom.”

The other congregations were Our Saviour, Dorchester, Mass. (2009), Grace, Hartford, Conn. (2008); Bethesda, Springfield, Mass. (2007), and Concordia, Worcester, Mass. (2006).

Follow bishop’s blog

One of the reasons Bishop Margaret G. Payne started her blog was to try out a different kind of communicating. You are invited to follow her brief reflections on the life of a bishop and the work of the ELCA at <http://bishoppayne.blogspot.com>. After the recent Bishop’s Convocation, which focused on “Care of Creation,” Payne blogs: “My own most significant way (to let the truth of my call to care for the earth sink into my bones) is to be wife to a farmer and support him in his passion for farms, trees, cows, conserving land and sustaining small family farms.”

The giraffe was given to Bishop Payne by Buyile Rani, one of the leaders at Joseph’s Coat of Many Colors, a new mission congregation in Bridgeport, Conn., which will be using the former St. Paul Lutheran Church. Rani, a native of Namibia, brought the giraffe back with him after stopping in Namibia on his way home to Connecticut from a stint serving in Iraq.

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said Pr. Mark S. Huber, an ELCA pastor and Sanctuary's mission developer.

Full communion is not a merger, but means that the two churches express a common confession of Christian faith and mutual recognition of Baptism and sharing Holy Communion; agree to mutual recognition of ordained ministers for service, upon request, in either church; and engage in common decision-making on critical matters.

The ELCA already has a full communion agreement with the Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, The Episcopal Church, The Moravian Church and United Church of Christ. This is the first such agreement for the UMC.

St. Ansgar first Reconciling in Christ congregation in Maine

At its annual congregational meeting earlier this year, St. Ansgar, Portland, Maine, unanimously voted to become a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation.

While the New England Synod is a RIC synod, St. Ansgar is the first congregation in Maine to move to RIC status. The Reconciling in Christ program of Lutherans Concerned/North America identifies congregations that incorporate into their church documents a statement of affirmation and welcome of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgendered (GLBT) individuals.

Citing the recent vote against same-gender marriage in Maine, the ongoing national struggle for civil rights and the actions of the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to affirm GLBT persons, the St. Ansgar Congregation Council urged the congregation to "thoughtfully consider voting to become a RIC congregation and to adopt the affirmation statement of welcome."

Referencing divisions within the ELCA regarding the 2009 decisions in Minneapolis, and with concern that negative press about these divisions might further alienate GLBT persons, the council characterized the vote as an opportunity to "... take a step to mediate this alienation through our willingness to step forward amongst this struggle and publicly affirm that we care for and welcome all of God's people."

St. Ansgar was founded in 1954 as a merger between Immanuel (Swedish) Lutheran Church and St. Ansgar (Danish) Evangelical Lutheran Church. While Danish and Swedish heritage remains important at St. Ansgar, the parish has grown in its diversity of national origin, race and sexual orientation as the needs and the population of the Portland area have evolved.



Pr. Derek Harman (left), Grace, West Springfield, Mass., and Imam Wissam Abdul Baki of the Islamic Society of Western Massachusetts, pray at the dedication of a new peace pole on Reformation Sunday, Oct. 31, at Grace.

Lutherans, Muslims come together to dedicate peace pole

On Reformation Sunday, Oct. 31, Grace, West Springfield, dedicated a peace pole in front of its building. The pole carries the message "May Peace Prevail on Earth" in four different languages – English, German, Spanish and Russian – based on the congregation's heritage and on the demographics of the community of West Springfield.

Among those at the dedication were guests from the Islamic Society of Western Massachusetts – a sign of unity between different religions in reaching for peace. "We have so much conflict in our world, so many things coming at us every day," said Pr. Derek Harman. "To have an opportunity to really focus on peace and neighborly gestures and reaching out to one another in love and respect is really important right now."

Children from both Grace and the Islamic Society placed stones they had decorated with messages or images of peace at the base of the pole, and made peace and prayer flags. The children also planted bulbs for a public peace garden parishioners plan to create around the pole next spring. A communal meal followed. Learn more about peace poles at www.peacepoles.com.

Guess who?

What pastor now serving in the New England Synod worked as the synod's director of communication during 1992-1995, long before he/she ever thought of ordained ministry? He/she edited two synod publications, plus the New England Supplement to *The Lutheran*, the ELCA's magazine, and served on the advisory committee for the ELCA's Department of Communication. Email your guess to sisterv@nesynod.org.

Synod publications win accolades

Synod publications have received several awards over the years. In 1985, the synod newspaper took first place for best feature story in a contest sponsored by the Lutheran Church in America. The article, "Lutherans bring Christ back to the cities," was written by contributing editor, **Caroline Ackerman**, a former journalism professor who served a stint as aviation editor of *Life* magazine and as the first female public relations officer for Shell Oil. She was a member of Christ, Natick, Mass.

the Lutheran Link

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Meet your ...



... Synod Council

Steve Converse (seated, left), synod secretary, Christ, West Boylston, Mass.; Bishop Margaret G. Payne, Resurrection, Roxbury, Mass.; Mark Winzler, synod vice president, Concordia, Manchester, Conn.; and Jeff Swanberg, synod treasurer, Immanuel, Holden, Mass.; also, Pr. Jim Debner (back, left), Zion, Southington, Conn.; Janelle Therriault, youth representative, Grace, Plainville, Conn.; Dave Dion, St. Paul, Terryville, Conn.; Pr. Dana Reardon, St. Paul, Warwick, R.I.; Jeff Herman-May, Trinity, Brattleboro, Vt.; Rebecca Krentz-Wee, young adult 18-30, University, Cambridge, Mass.; Luz Rubert-Lopez, Immanuel, Meriden, Conn.; Lloyd Smith, Grace, Hartford, Conn.; Pr. Sharon Hughes, Good Shepherd, Rutland, Vt.; Steve Conner, LC of the Redeemer, Woburn,

Mass.; Pr. Mark Nordskog, Prince of Peace, Brookfield, Conn.; Karin Kohl, Pilgrim, Warwick, R.I.; Pr. Jeff Goodrich (back), Good Shepherd, Westborough, Mass.; Kathy Read, First, West Barnstable, Mass.; Pr. Robert Waworuntu, Imanuel Indonesian, Newington, N.H.; Ruth Nunnally, Our Saviour, Dorchester, Mass.; Sam Allison (back), young adult 18-30, Emanuel, Hartford, Conn.; Charlene Wright, Immanuel, Oxford, Conn., and Pr. Mark Huber, Sanctuary, Marshfield, Mass. Missing is Pr. Marian Marks, Grace, Auburn, Maine, and Ossie Rambarran, Zion, Oxford, Mass. Got a question about what's happening in the synod? Contact them at <http://www.newenglandsynod.org/synod-leaders/around-the-synod/synod-council>.