

Synod Ordains Two Pastors, Consecrates First Deaconess

In a joyous celebration, marked with trumpet and brass, the New England Synod ordained two new pastors, consecrated its first deaconess in the history of the ELCA, and installed a new mission director and 15 conference deans.

Two young women who have grown up in the Synod, Stephanie A. Smith and Amanda L. (Sera) Warner, were ordained to Word and Sacrament as pastors in New England. Sister Virginia E. Strahan, another native New Englander, was consecrated to a ministry of Word and Service as a deaconess.

The Rev. Dr. Derrick Paul Gomez, formerly a pastor in The Bronx, N.Y., was installed as our new mission director. He replaces the Rev. Fred Wedemeyer, who retired in January.

Pr. Smith, a member of Pilgrim, Warwick, R.I., has been called to serve as an associate pastor at Immanuel, Amherst, Mass., specializing in campus ministry and outreach. She received her M.Div. in May from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, Berkeley, Calif., and a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in religion in 1998 from Muhlenberg College, Allentown, Penn. She is a twin.

Pr. Warner, a member of Christ, Middletown, Conn., has been called as associate pastor at Prince of Peace, Brookfield, Conn. She received her M.Div. in 2001 from Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia, S.C., and a bachelor degree in religion from Susquehanna University, Selingsgrove, Penn, in 1997. She is married to Britton Warner.

Sister Virginia has been called to serve as a communication specialist for Lutheran Social Services of New England and the New England Synod. As part of that call, she serves as editor of "The Lutheran Link," the new bi-monthly synod publication which replaces both the "New England Lutheran" and the "Synod News." A native New Englander, Sister Virginia was baptized at Gethsemane, Manchester, N.H., and has been a member of First, Gardner, Mass.,

since childhood. A former newspaper reporter, she received her M.Div. from the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia in 1998.

In her sermon based on the story of Zaccheus, Bishop Margaret G. Payne asked the new pastors and deaconess to think of themselves as "agents of awakening" who will first help people name their longings and then find them trees to climb.

"You are called to give people a hand up into the tree that they need," said Bishop Payne. "God will give you the wisdom and strength to do that, and all the while you will need to work on your own tree-climbing skills, so that you can be up in the branches with them, and not shouting unhelpful directions from the ground below.

"And then, you will not only be the agents, but the partners in their awakening. Together you will find your way into the infinite, rich detail and joy of new life in Jesus Christ." ■

Assembly Edition 2002



Edward Edler receives the *Soli Deo Gloria* Award

In 2000, he was one of three recipients of the new Synod Council Award for outstanding and faithful service to the Synod. Edler received the Synod Council Award for his "tireless activity in bringing order to the Synod's finances in the wake of the resignation of treasurer George Patrick."

Ed is a member of St. Paul, Longmeadow, Mass., where he has served on the congregation council (as secretary for many years), is a lay preacher and communion assistant, and has served on many committees over the years.

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Moore Good Words For The Assembly

The repeated New England query, “Can any good thing come out of New Jersey?,” was answered again in the affirmative yesterday – not once, but twice – when the Rev. Gladys Moore, pastor of St. Matthew, Jersey City, and associate to New Jersey Synod Bishop Roy Riley, delivered the Assembly keynote in two segments.

In her first address, Pr. Moore focused on the fourth component of our newly-adopted vision statement, “Trusting in Partnership.” Explicating the intervention of Moses’ father-in-law (Exodus 18:13-27), she celebrated Moses’ discovery of the invaluable partners who were surrounding him.

Pr. Moore urged the Assembly toward the development of a greater sense of mutuality, moving beyond the tendency to “do *for* others” to “doing *with* them.” She asked us to remember that we are not alone in mission and ministry and urged us to listen carefully to one another (especially those different from us), which can lead us toward the discovery of the multiplicity of partners around us. The *discovery* of partners, she said, is the essential prelude to *trusting* them.

This partnering theme was continued in her second address based on Jesus’ appointment of 70 disciples as forerunners (Luke 10:1-9). The apostolate of the 70 parallels the baptismal imperative we have received to “enter the plentiful harvest with a sense of urgency for mission and expansion of ministry.”

Pr. Moore concluded her remarks by urging the Assembly to pray for more laborers as well as a heart for invitation and making connections in the community. ■

Pr. Christopher Hoyer, Trinity, Worcester, MA

Soli Deo

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After retiring from IBM, in 1990, he taught part-time for seven years at Springfield Technical Community College, retiring from there in 2000.

His faithful service to the New England Synod goes back to the Lutheran Church in America, where he took an active role in synod activities. When the New England Synod, ELCA, began in 1988, he was appointed to serve as the chair of the Department for Research and Planning. He was elected to the Synod Council in 1991 and served faithfully until 2000. In addition to his Council responsibilities, he was a member of the Executive Committee, continued his role with Research and Planning and was a member and liaison to the Department for Finance. When it was discovered that synod funds had been embezzled, he took on the awesome task of Interim Treasurer. His remarkable work in researching the treasurer and synod files to reconstruct fund information was instrumental in the synod’s recovery of much of the missing money.

As a member of the Department for Finance he helped develop the Synod’s Accounting Policy and Procedures Manual used as a model by many other synods. His expertise in financial matters as well as computer technology is called on regularly by the treasurer’s office and the synod support staff. He is currently developing a data base for the synod and has recently worked with Cathy LaChance to create quarterly statements for congregational mission support.

He and his wife Betty, also recently retired, live in Longmeadow. They have two grown children, Christian and Karen and one grandchild, 9 month old Katie.

He and Betty are celebrating their 44th wedding anniversary June 7, 2002. ■

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LTSP Honors Pr. John Stendahl

The Rev. John K. Stendahl, pastor of Lutheran Church of the Newtons, Newton, Mass., has received the prestigious Muhlenberg Medal from the Lutheran Theological Seminary of Philadelphia (LTSP).

The award was presented Thursday on behalf of the seminary by Mark Staples, LTSP communications officer, who was born and raised in Massachusetts.

The award, which was inaugurated in 1992, is given by LTSP for exemplary service in congregational and campus ministry in Regions 7 and 8 of the ELCA. It honors those who preach and teach the gospel faithfully in the tradition of Henry Melchior Muhlenberg, a preacher in colonial America who traveled from Georgia to New York, founding congregations.

Staples praised Stendahl for deepening congregational faith and expanding congregational horizons, as well as for his leadership both in the Synod and in ecumenical circles. ■

Election Results

Synod Council

Charles Anderson
Wendell Beckman
Don Blume
Marilyn Durant
Susan Henry
Heidi Jacoby
Richard Johnson
John Marschhausen
Amanda Nelson
Keila Medina Rodriguez
Dan Wilfrid

Churchwide Voting Members 2003

G. Scott Cady
Hal Colston
Brad Cook
Betty Fairchild
Don Gaston
Rafaela Morales
Ronald Morin
Fredrick "Rick" Neu
Luz Rubert-Lopez
Jan Steinbauer
John Stendahl
Tracy Swan-Tuite
Fred Wedemeyer
Barbara West
Mark Winzler

Life Enrichment Task Force Offers Healing Service

Foreheads shiny from having just been anointed, hundreds of New England Lutherans pondered the words of Pastor Saïd Ailabouni, some deep in prayer, others singing softly, many in tears. As the skies literally opened up with pouring rain, Ailabouni, pleaded in prayer for God to open up the heavens and "do something about our world."

His sermon, a turning point of the healing service on Thursday evening, proclaimed the liberation of Jesus Christ in "breaking down barriers between us and God, the barriers between life and death." He lifted up the message of the prophet Hosea in an exciting and dynamic way, a message echoed by Jesus in Matthew's gospel. Hosea's exhortation of hope and declaration of "God's steadfast love" would, Ailabouni, prayed, "permeate our homes, our nations, and our churches."

Apparently, Pastor Ailabouni, speaks from his own experience. He grew up in Nazareth, but first heard the message of the gospel from a "rather boring" professor at college in Moorehead, Minn. He is currently a representative of the ELCA's Division for Global Mission. He brought greetings from Churchwide Bishop Mark Hanson, ELCJ Bishop Munib Younan, and other Churchwide divisions. ■

Paul Sinnott, AIM

Hats Off for 20 Years Service

During the afternoon session, voting members recognized Anne Nickerson for 20 years of faithful service as Administrative Assistant to the New England Synod. She began her service with the LCA when the synod moved its offices to Worcester, MA, and stayed with the synod through two more moves and three bishops and staffs. Vice President Mark Winzler read letters of congratulations from Hal Wimmer and Bob Isaksen, and cited a list of her gifts and skills demonstrated over the years.

Wearing a hat donned with cartoons of her talents, Anne accepted a plaque from Bishop Payne who expressed her appreciation for Anne's support and honesty. "This is such a wonderful award, and given to me for doing something I really love, and I get paid too!" Anne said. "You are a wonderful group of people, and I thank you for welcoming me into this family of faith." ■

Churches Urged to Feed the Starving

A clarion call to action was put before Voting Members at our 2002 Synod Assembly Thursday by Pastors John Corgan and Kari Keyl, Synod Hunger Appeal leaders.

People of New England – very much a part of the 26 percent of the world’s population with 74 percent of the world’s food resources – are called to action.

Each New England Synod congregation is urged to schedule two ELCA Hunger Appeal offerings in 2002. It is fervently hoped that the first offering will be June 16, and the second offering Oct. 28.

A letter from Bishop Margaret G. Payne is available for congregations to send to the homes of all their members. The letter urges us – out of our abundance – to give extravagantly to make more food available for people in our world, where 24,000 die every day because of hunger and hunger-related causes.

To emphasize the need, the assembly sang:

“Where is bread? The call is rising.
Millions cry who must be fed.
God your answer seems surprising:
‘You, my Church, you give them bread.’
Bread to fill each hungry spirit,
Bread for hungry stomachs, too!
Give us bread and help us share it. Richly blessed, may we serve You.”

Let’s share our bread with the hungry.

Pr. Ron Jackson, Associate to the Bishop



Pre-assembly reports “In the Mail”

Barbara Lamson and Vida Nabi of the synod staff delivered 800 pounds of pre-assembly reports to the post office. ■

God’s Abundance: Live It!

Jesus said:

“I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.”

John 10:10

As Stewards of the Gospel in a world filled with death we joyfully embrace our baptismal call by:

PRAYING UNCEASINGLY
GIVING EXTRAVAGANTLY
INSISTING ON JUSTICE
TRUSTING IN PARTNERSHIP

Walking together, we will:

Invite 20,000 more people to worship each Sunday

Double what we now give away

Strengthen our ties with and support of the ELCJ

Link every seeker and youth, every pastor and congregation with partners in faith and mission

This is our abundant life to share.

Council of Churches Marks 100 Years

The Rev. Dr. Diane Kessler was warmly introduced by Bishop Payne as one who acts on our behalf, one who keeps denomination leaders informed and in tow, one who is a good friend.

Dr. Kessler brought greetings to the Assembly from the Massachusetts Council of Churches and thanked voting members for approving a resolution on Thursday commemorating the occasion of the 100th anniversary.

She reminded that while we are not perfect, we do have unity through Baptism with other Christians around the world. On a recent visit to Ireland for a meeting of an ecumenical working group members gathered around a hospital bed visiting an ill colleague were asked: “Are you family?” The varied group from all corners of the world, different religions/different cultures/different races all responded in one voice: “Yes!” “We are family.”

The New England Synod is part of the ecumenical movement in New England and around the world where Christians seek peace and justice and live for the day that “They may all be one.” ■