

ELCA Strategic Direction #2

Claimed, gathered and sent by God's grace for the sake of the world, the ELCA will: Support congregations in their call to be faithful, welcoming and generous, sharing the mind of Christ.

Contents

Faithful –



New Englanders just keep giving and giving and giving to help fight world hunger, p. 4

Welcoming –

Grace, Hartford

Renovations eliminate barriers, lift spirits, p. 7

Generous –

Trinity, Worcester

Tithe is response to God's largess, p. 1

Partners

Peace, Wayland, Mass., and Synagogue share worship space and more, p. 3

Lathrop keynote speaker at Synod Assembly June 3-5

'Marked with the cross of Christ forever, we are claimed, gathered and sent for the sake of the world' ...

is the theme of the 17th annual Assembly of the New England Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America set for Thursday through Saturday, June 3-5, at the Sturbridge Host in Sturbridge, Mass.

In an historic move, the Synod will consecrate its first **Diaconal Minister – Suzanne Beauregard**, a member of First, East Greenwich, R.I, as well as commission an Associate in Ministry and ordain at least one pastor at the Assembly Eucharist.

Keynote speaker is Dr. Gordon Lathrop, chaplain and professor of liturgy at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, one of the Synod's partners. The emphasis for this Assembly is **partnership**.

In lieu of a healing service, the Assembly will offer the **St. Thomas Mass**, a celebration of Holy Communion with an opportunity after the sermon for a variety of acts of personal devotion, including laying on of hands and anointing, and meditation with icons.

Also new this year are entertainment and fellowship opportunities, as well as a hymn sing and interludes by "A Bunch of Guys."

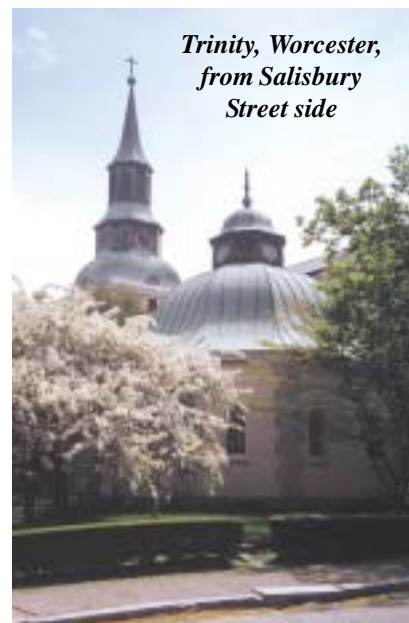
"We are excited to add some fun and fellowship while still doing the important business of the Synod," said Christine Hayward, assembly chair. "These changes are moving us toward the type of assembly we hope to have in 2005 at The Centrum in Worcester." ■

Trinity tithes \$34,000 to Synod and ELCA

At its annual meeting last December, Trinity, Worcester, Mass., voted to tithe two recent undesignated gifts.

This tithe, amounting to \$34,259, was given to the New England Synod with the understanding that the Synod would keep 45 percent (\$15,417) for ministry within New England and send the remaining 55 percent (\$18,842) to the ELCA in Chicago for churchwide ministries. This is standard practice for all gifts the Synod receives, as it partners with the ELCA.

The congregation also voted to set aside 10 percent of all future undesignated gifts, bequests or other estate gifts as a supplemental tithe. Such amounts will be in



Trinity, Worcester, from Salisbury Street side

Continues on page 7

From the Bishop

Partnership enfolds New Sweden in love

The first call came on his cell phone early on a Monday morning in late April more than a year ago. My associate, Pr. Hans Arnesen, would receive many more such calls as the tragic story of arsenic poisoning unfolded at Gustaf Adolph Lutheran Church in New Sweden, Maine. Soon the story was national news.

Wherever I go, people still ask about New Sweden. Even Garrison Keillor knows the story and sent a wonderful letter to the congregation last summer.

But there is an untold story. It is a story of partnership that enabled loving care to surround the congregation as it grappled with the terrible reality of the poisonings, the pain of media attention, and the months of struggle that have followed.

Pr. Arnesen traveled immediately to be with the victims of the poisoning and the members of the congregation. He worked with Pr. Jim Morgan, who was serving as interim pastor of Gustaf Adolph. They conducted the funeral for Walter Morrill, 78, long-time member who died. Also providing pastoral support was Pr. Elaine Hewes, Bangor, Maine, who cared for the victims hospitalized in Bangor – and their families – each day for many weeks. Her congregation provided meals for the victims' families and set up a fund to receive donations.

Soon, I followed to lead the first worship service after the poisonings. Pr. Dave Cote of Covenant, Gardner, Mass., who is a specialist in Critical Incident Stress Management, had supplied me with resources to provide the right kind of care in those early days. Local ecumenical partners in Maine supported us with meals, volunteer help and prayers. Many ELCA congregations sent notes, flowers and the assurance of their prayers.

The ELCA provided support each day as Pr. Arnesen and I handled decisions about press conferences, media interviews and the creation of a response that would support the congregation and also witness to God's presence in the midst of the tragedy. My ear was permanently connected to my cell phone, and usually I was talking to Pr. Eric Shafer, the Director of the Department for Communication of the ELCA, who guided us through a puzzling array of requests and dilemmas. (Pr. Shafer will be the ELCA Rep at our synod assembly this year, and we will have an opportunity to thank him for his help.)



Bishop Payne

Since then, numerous people throughout our synod have continued to help. Counselors have worked with the congregation and prayers have continued. Throughout the summer and fall, pastors traveled to New Sweden, contributing their time for worship leadership and pastoral care each week. This gift of time usually was provided by their own congregations as assistance for Gustaf Adolph.

So, you see, the support that we provided was possible because we live in a partnership of the gospel that connects us in love to one another, and uses many people with many gifts to respond to the suffering of one among us. For me, that is the most important story. I thank you for your growing understanding of the profound importance of our partnership as the Body of Christ in New England, and I pray that this partnership will continue to grow and bear fruit in many ways so that we may be a strong witness to the gospel. ■

Former New Englander serves as interim pastor at New Sweden

Following a steady rotation of visiting clergy, Gustaf Adolph, New Sweden, Maine, finally has a new interim pastor – the Rev. Dr. Peter G. Drever Jr. of Norridgewock, Maine.

Pr. Drever, who served a number of congregations in New England before traveling to other synods, retired to a 19th century farmhouse in Norridgewock with his wife, Julianne, in June 2003. A former member of Our Saviour, Dorchester, Mass., he was ordained in 1964 and served his first call at Trinity, Shelton, Conn.



His ministry began Ash Wednesday at Gustaf Adolph. It entails a five-hour weekly commute, one way (246.2 miles).

As the investigation continues into the arsenic poisonings April 27, 2003, following Sunday worship, the congregation and pastor are addressing the issues of healing and mission together. One glorious sign of new life is the **triplets born recently to Erich and Alana Margeson**. Erich, then 31, was the youngest of the 13 poisoning victims. ■

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Deadline for the July 2004 issue: May 24

Lutheran congregation and conservative Synagogue are •Brothers on a hillside in Wayland•

The following article appeared March 28 in the SudburyTown Crier under the headline: These neighbors have faith.

By John Hilliard / News Staff Writer
MetroWest Daily News

WAYLAND, Mass. – What began as a neighborly agreement to share a parking lot is growing into a strong relationship between a Lutheran congregation and Jewish synagogue.

The two have been cooperating on advocating for social issues such as ending hunger and homelessness, but something beyond cooperation drives the relationship between Peace Lutheran Church and the neighboring Congregation Or Atid, as the Jewish synagogue offers its sanctuary space to be used by a Christian parish.

It began when the church let the synagogue use the church parking lot overflow parking during High Holidays and special events. When the church needed to be renovated, though, they asked the synagogue to use its library as a temporary home.

Synagogue officials had other ideas. "They should not use the library, they should use the sanctuary," said Rabbi Sally Finestone of Congregation Or Atid. So since last fall, the synagogue's sanctuary has celebrated both Jewish and Christian religious traditions.

The Rev. Jeffery Johnson, pastor of Peace, has been thankful for the help. "It was a generous and neighborly thing to do," he said. "The people at Or Atid have been so good, so patient."

Now, the renovation at Peace Lutheran has been delayed several times — first by Christmas, then by Easter. There may be a real chance that a

conservative Jewish synagogue may host an Easter celebration, said Finestone.

And the space is available if they need it.

"They take such beautiful care of the sanctuary, such respect of the space," said Finestone.

The sharing of space between the two congregations has expanded into interfaith discussions. Recently, the two groups were part of a discussion on the controversial film, "The Passion of the Christ," as part of the Wayland Clergy Association.

Johnson thought the open setting helped get honest dialogue moving.

"We've talked freely about our views of the movie," he said.

This may have paved the way for further meetings between the two Wayland congregations.



Ron Riggert (left) and Pr. Jeff Johnson from Peace and Rabbi Sally Finestone and Frank Maxant from Congregation Or Atid during a discussion of Mel Gibson's film, "The Passion of the Christ" at the synagogue.

"We had a wonderful discussion about Mr. Gibson's movie 'The Passion,'" said Finestone. "We wanted it to be the first of many interfaith discussions."

Those discussions are important because it allows people of different faiths to see a different perspective, said Johnson.

Both religious leaders said learning about other religious beliefs helped develop their own sense of where their traditions come from. Johnson thought Christians gained from learning about

Continues on page 6

40th anniversary
congregations

Nativity, Rockport, Maine, celebrated its 40th anniversary in March with a banquet and festive worship. Guest preacher was the Rev. Peter DeRuiter, Nativity's first pastor, who helped charter the congregation in 1964.

Pictured above are the designer/makers of a banner quilted for the anniversary: Beth Guiseley (left), Donna Perry and Betty Johnson, with current Pr. Jerry LiaBraaten. The rainbow rising out of a pool of primal waters represents the first half of the congregation's anniversary theme, "Renewing the Covenant," and the water dripping into the baptismal shell represents the second half, "Sharing God's Grace." Nativity will continue to celebrate its 40th anniversary throughout 2004 with events involving evangelism, outreach and community service.