

Bishop's Road Show

April 1, 2008

Dear Friends:

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

I realize that I just have not been keeping up with my Road Shows. The reason for this is the fact that I have been on the road quite a bit lately. To provide you an example of this, I was in the Synod Office last Tuesday, March 25 from 8:30 am – 1:30 pm. I then drove to the Pittsburgh Airport where I was to catch a flight to Chicago at 5:08 pm which finally took off at 8:00 p.m.

I was in Chicago for the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Ministries Review Table for new starts. Nine bishops form the nine regions of this church and meet with Mission Directors and Churchwide staff to review proposals for brand new congregations. We reviewed projects from 2007 that were approved, but not started and reviewed 36 proposals for 2008. In a day's time, we awarded grants of \$700,000 to start these 36 new congregations. This number will be added to the already in the process for one to three years – some 275 new starts. Your church is at work planting new congregations and new opportunities for people to learn of and to follow Jesus. I returned home from this event on Thursday around 1:00 p.m. and worked at home. Friday, I worked in the Synod Office and remained in the Fairmont area that night so I could attend the Senior Camp meeting for Camp Luther. We met at St. Mark's, Clarksburg. I then left that meeting in the early afternoon to travel to Hedgesville, WV to stay the night with Pastor Karen and Eric Valentine and their children Jacob and Elizabeth. On Sunday morning, we traveled to Harper's Ferry for Sunday School and worship with the community of St. John's. After worship and a brief fellowship time, I met with the Church Council of St. John's over lunch. That afternoon, I drove home arriving in time for dinner, a brief chance to catch up with Terry as to her week, only to pack my suitcase for another trip.

This morning, I drove to Charleston for the West Virginia Council of Churches quarterly meeting. I am gradually coming to an end of my term as president of this board in October. I was unaware that I am now completing my fourth year as president of this important body. I will spend the night in Charleston at the Catholic Retreat Center, John XXIII, as I am meeting with the Church Council of St. Timothy's to begin a search process for a second pastor.

Early tomorrow morning, I will leave Charleston for the Synod Office and an annual meeting with the Region 8 Board of Pensions representative. My afternoon is filled by appointments, and then I will go home, hopefully in time for dinner. Wednesday and Thursday of this week I will be working at home. I will return to the Synod Office on Friday. That afternoon, I will meet with Synod Council's Budget and Finance Committee. Saturday will be an off day, and Terry and I will leave for a week of vacation starting April 6-12.

If you have a need while I am on vacation, please phone Maureen Corrigan in the Synod Office. Maureen will have a list of folks who she can refer you to until I return. This upcoming vacation will be one in which I will not be available by phone or e-mail.

The above is a long way to say that if I have not responded to your E-mail, it is because I have been driving or scheduled tight enough that I just have not figured out a way to do that type of work while I am driving the Synod mobile!

There is one consistent theme in some of your E-mails, and that is when we will see the Synod Assembly agenda. The agenda is one that I work in concert with the Chaplain(s) and present to Synod Council for their approval. Synod Council meets on Saturday, April 26. As soon after that meeting as possible, the proposed agenda will be posted on the Synod Web Site.

Mary Kinsler, adult daughter of Pastor Jim and Martha Kinsler, has been accepted in the young adult Global Missions Program of the ELCA. She is going to the discernment event in a couple weeks. She is very excited and will be going either to Argentina or the United Kingdom.

The Rev. David Westphal has accepted my request to serve as the Dean of the Upper Ohio Valley Conference. Pastor Judith Marlow served in that capacity, and with her up-coming retirement, she had asked me to find a replacement for her now.

The rest of this note will be one of news about our Rostered Leaders:

- The Rev. Sarah Lee-Faulkner has received and accepted the call to serve as an Assistant to Bishop Kusserow, the new bishop in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA. Pastor Sarah's major responsibilities will be Evangelism and Youth Ministry. Her last Sunday at the Church of the Covenant will be April 30. She officially begins her new call on May 1, 2008.
- Today, the Rev. William Ridenhour returns from his four month Sabbatical. I'm sure that the "Saint's of God" at First English are anxious for his return.
- Last Tuesday, March 25, the Rev. William Carlson returned home from the Oakland Memorial Hospital.
- Yesterday, March 31, the Rev. Judith Marlow was scheduled to receive her fourth chemotherapy treatment. The original goal was to do some treatments and then surgery to remove this shrinking tumor. Pastor Judy has announced her retirement date as June 1. I will meet with the Council's of Messiah and Good Shepherd Lutheran Churches on Wednesday evening to begin the process of calling a new pastor.

I invite your prayers for the above named people and congregations as they deal with issues of transition, grief, change and new life.

Yours in our Lord's service,

+ Ralph