

Dear Friends:

I learned on Thursday that Pastor Dana Holter's mother, Olive, died on Tuesday, August 25, 2009. The Memorial Service will be held this coming Tuesday, September 1, 2009 in North Dakota. Pastor Holter reported that he and his family have been praying for the gift of death for nearly a year. This news has come as a blessing to the Holter family. I invite your prayers for the entire Holter family.

Also on Tuesday, September 1, 2009, I have invited all of our Rostered Leaders to meet with me at St. Paul's in Morgantown, WV, at 10:30 a.m. There I will make a presentation, receive questions and listen to their concerns. Obviously this event has been prompted by the major action of the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. If you attended or did not attend the Synod Assembly in June it is important for you to know that we as a synod took straw votes on the social statement and the four ministry resolutions and we defeated them by margins of two to one and three to one, respectively.

Now, our work is to hold this synod together with the knowledge that our congregations do not have to offer services of blessing and we are not required to call gay or lesbian pastors to fill our pulpits.

One of the offers that I will make to our Rostered Leaders on Tuesday is that I will travel anywhere in this synod to meet with any group to discuss this Churchwide decision. For most, if not all of our congregations, the action of Churchwide will be one that you will not see any change in your congregational life at all.

I invite you to be open to discussing your thoughts and feelings with your pastor, interim pastor or with me. It may take as long as nine months before any of the actions of the Churchwide assembly are put into place. It will take that long for policy changes to be written and approved by the ELCA Church Council. Even when they are written, your bound conscience can easily permit us as a synod to refuse to follow these actions.

Yours in our Lord's service,

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