

Discipleship

Discipleship was the theme of the 2011 West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod Assembly. Meeting high in the mountains of West Virginia at Snowshoe Resort, a site that was equally inaccessible to all, the theme was expressed in all six devotional times, within worship and in the bishop's report.

This assembly will be remembered as a celebration of the bishop's 35th anniversary of ordination, the ordination of seminarian Neil Cadle, and the marvelous hospitality of the Mountain Parish and of the South Fork Lutheran Ministry.

Following each of the six discipleship devotions, the 35th Anniversary Committee had folks ready to make presentations to Bishop Ralph Dunkin. Some moments were quite serious, one included a box of letters, while another highlighted his 30-plus years at Camp Luther, Clarksburg, W.Va. A great deal of laughter was heard when the camp pictures were displayed—director Mike Propst compared Dunkin's legs to twigs.

The 24th assembly raised more than \$2,000 for the synod's Mission Fund (A Seed Planted) as an anonymous donor contributed \$1,000 provided that the synod matched it. The assembly worship offering will provide about \$600 to the synod's Rostered Leaders Debt Reduction Fund and a similar amount to the WVU chaplains' ministry.

A detailed report was heard concerning the synod's evangelism strategy.

The synod's Futures Task Force also reported on plans for a school for lay and clergy around the theme of teaching the word and learning to be effective witnesses. Craig Richter, the group's chair, proposed that in light of the new directions of the ELCALIFT (Living Into the Future Together) Task Force, the synod's task force needed to continue its work beyond this gathering, with a new report by the 2012 synod assembly.

The assembly adopted five memorials, including praise for the genetics study; a call for gifts to the ELCA Special Needs Retirement Fund that helps those on the roster who have lost income due to the economic downturn; praise for the LIFT Task Force for its work, with a call for further study on the question of where the church places magisterial authority; a call to change mission support from that of a proportional share to a per capita system adjusted for U.S.

Census tract median family income; and questioning if the LIFT Task Force's call for magisterial

Voting members of the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod get to work during the assembly. Five memorials were adopted.



Bishop Ralph Dunkin ordains Neil Cadle during the synod assembly. Cadle was called to the Mason-Jackson Lutheran Shared Ministry.

authority to be placed in the "Office of the Presiding Bishop" is not a violation of Augustana XXVIII.

In his report, Dunkin invited congregations with the "best practices" when it comes to the four marks of discipleship to speak to the assembly. The Rev. Scott Robinson, Dorothy Tuel and Don Sincel of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Oakland, Md., spoke of "inviting" others. Over five years, 125 people have been invited to St. Mark's. Tom Delauney, a member of St. James Lutheran Church, Uvilla, W.Va., also described his attempts at inviting someone to come to church with him. St. James has more than doubled in size since 2000.

The Revs. Beth and David Westphal presented a comical skit on prayer and the need to practice it.

Sherri Schafer and the Rev. Chris-

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West Virginia-Western Maryland

At St. James, they are 'one body in Christ'

About 16 years ago, Anna Lou, a member of St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wheeling, W.Va., had a vision to help provide food for the area's less fortunate families. What began with a few bags of food has developed into help for thousands over the years.

The need is evident. In 2008, St. James provided food for 662 families and 1,222 individuals. In 2010, 1,318 families and 2,620 individuals were helped. As of May 2011, the pantry has distributed groceries to 445 families and 937 individuals. The pantry serves people in Ohio and Marshall counties in West Virginia and Belmont County in Ohio.

The pantry gives needy families groceries every fourth Tuesday of each month from 11 a.m. to noon. But they give groceries to anyone who expresses the need anytime during office hours throughout the week.

To keep the pantry operational, there is a tremendous amount of effort and commitment from many volunteers—from St. James and the

community. This includes, but is not limited to, food bank pickup, shopping, organizing, record-keeping, filling bags and distribution.

St. James also receives assistance from its sister congregations (Edgewood, St. Mark's, Christ Lutheran of Mozart, Messiah in Moundsville and Trinity/St. Matthew) through "Brown Bag Sunday," an appeal for nonperishable items to help stock the pantry. The local Postal Service's annual food drive in May generated about 500 pounds in canned food for St. James.

The Sunday school children also participate by collecting change on the last Sunday of the month.

As of June 2011, St. James has had 1,507 pounds of food donated by community efforts. To date, we've purchased 1,355 pounds of food and received a staggering 10,855 pounds of food from the Mountaineer Food Bank in Gassaway, W.Va.

In addition, St. James sponsors the annual "October Fair," a fundraising event where community members are invited to buy a lunch special. The

proceeds help provide 120 families with complete Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners.

St. James tries to be a resource for other community programs by sharing food with the Wheeling Catholic Charity and The Wheeling Soup Kitchen. These ecumenical efforts help St. James grow in its vision and understanding of being "one body in Christ."

In 2012, St. James will strive to implement new ideas. Members realize they are serving a great need by providing immediate access to food, but they also want to provide knowledge and resources to help prevent hunger. So with each bag of groceries, they plan to place an informational tip on budgeting for groceries and/or provide affordable recipes.

In the springtime they will provide tips on growing vegetables and herbs. They plan to approach local hardware stores and supermarkets for donations of seed packets that will be handed out to pantry consumers.

During the October Fair, they will provide a wish list with each meal purchased. This will help bring awareness to the problem of men, women and children who require the most basic of necessities—food. St. James will also reach out to schools and businesses to form partnerships that will build the pantry's stock for years to come.

For the past 16 years, St. James has carried on with Lou's vision. They believe they are living out their baptismal call to those in need. This program has helped members grow in a deeper spiritual relationship with Christ through God's people. The work of the food pantry is a way to live out the gospel message in providing for those less fortunate. □



Volunteers from St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wheeling, W.Va., have fun collecting food for less fortunate families.



Display tables provided assembly participants information about synod ministries.

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tine Olson, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Martinsburg, W.Va., spoke of service.

Lois Broyles and Dunkin spoke of “giving.” Broyles’ congregation, Christ the King Lutheran, Huntington, W.Va., has doubled their giving over the last four years. Dunkin commented upon our willingness to ignore the

1,000 Bible verses that call upon us to tithe.

Elected at this year’s assembly were Paul Wangerin, St. John’s Lutheran, Martinsburg, W.Va., as vice president; the Rev. Matthew Riegel as treasurer;

the Rev. Craig Richter as the clergy representative from the Potomac Conference; Megan Clark, First English Lutheran Church, Wheeling, W.Va., as laity from the Upper Ohio Valley Conference on Synod Council; Nathaniel Ellis, member of St. Luke’s Lutheran Church, Beckley, W.Va., as youth member at large on the council.

The assembly elected Dorcas Friedline and Sarah Soltow to the synod’s Consultation Committee; the Rev. Wanda Childs and the Rev.

Dr. C. Scott Robinson to the Discipline Committee; George Friedline and David Ellis to the Discipline Committee.

The Rev. William C. Ridenhour was also elected to a four-year term on the Board of Directors of the Lutheran Seminary at Gettysburg (Pa.).

The Friday night eucharist was held in St. Bernard Chapel. Worship was conducted by members of New Hope Lutheran Church, Minnehaha Springs, W.Va., with the Rev. Wendy Richter and Vicar Jessica Hamme officiating.

The Rev. Ron Schlak was the preacher for the celebration of the bishop’s 35th ordination anniversary and the ordination of Neil Cadle. Within the service, prayers were prayed for the bishop and a new red stole was presented. Peggy Blatt created the stole and the bishop noted that he would display it in the synod office. □

Camp Luther 2011 explores the theme of ‘God Chooses Us!’

God Chooses Us! The theme rang from the mountains and echoed in the valleys of Camp Luther 2011. The 4-H facility in Cowan, W.Va., home to Camp Luther for 66 years, was filled for a week with 270 campers and 80 volunteer staff members.

Each day started with morning worship. The pastors were creative in keeping restless juniors, distracted intermediates and sleepy seniors engaged. A mock “storm” under a parachute, video clips of cartoon animals portraying Jesus and his disciples, and skits by campers and staff carried out the daily themes of Jesus calls us, Jesus protects us, Jesus speaks to us, Jesus comes to us and Jesus meets us.

Vespers held the same appeal for campers and staff alike. We gathered

around the swimming pool while fully clothed clergy leapt into the water, we followed a rocky path through eight stations of the cross, we held hands and sang and prayed and learned that God truly chose each of us in many ways, through many voices.

As the three age groups divided for their daily classes, they explored the themes as well as nature and craft activities. Campers spent their afternoons in free time, complete with swimming, four-square, flag football, kickball, soccer, tie-dying, more crafts, and just hanging out with friends old and new.

At the 5 O’clock News, the entire camp gathered for a summary of the day’s activities. Singing popular Christian music (some old favorites, and some special camp songs), hear-

ing about sports challenges, listening to messages from the director, and enjoying reports on creek stomps are part of the daily meeting.

Evenings saw Olympics in each program, complete with tug-of-war, shaving cream relays, lots of water balloons, and a king and queen crowned in the junior camp. Talent shows brought out the best in every group. At the weenie roast the little ones were paired with the seniors for a pre-dinner tour of the senior cabins. A street dance for intermediates and seniors, and a “fancier” dance for those two programs are popular annual events.

Director Mike Propst and the staff are starting planning for 2012. We hope you will join us on the hillsides of Camp Luther! □

News from our synod

'Faith in Action'

Men from Grace Lutheran in Fairmont, W.Va., participated in a work weekend with other area churches doing repairs and upgrades at social service organizations. The men took care of repairing the steps and stone wall at the entrance to the American Red Cross building located on First Street in Fairmont.

Another work weekend is being planned for early next year, and the men from Grace plan on participating again.

'Chicks' for sale

The adult Sunday school class of Grace Lutheran in Fairmont, W.Va., sold paper chicks during Lent for \$1 each. This was a project to help people of Third World countries who have no other means of supporting their families.

A total of 144 chicks were sold by Easter Sunday.

Lutheran World Relief sends the chicks to people who agree to give the first hatchlings to another family. This keeps the gift going.

The chick sale was so successful that plans are being made to do a turkey sale later this year for Thanksgiving for families in the Fairmont area.

Trinity's Table receives grant

On Wednesday evening, Dec. 15, 2010, just before Trinity's midweek Advent worship service, Bob Ballard, financial adviser for Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, paid a visit and presented Trinity's Table with a check for a \$5,000 Economic Bridge Grant.



2011 Winter Weekend

A Winter Weekend in Garrett County, Md., was held Jan. 14-16, 2011. In attendance were 15 youth and eight adults from the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod. They stayed at Camp Hickory in Accident, Md. Friday night was spent at the camp, and Saturday was spent at The Wisp, with opportunities to snow tube, ski, snow board, etc. Saturday evening the group ate dinner at St. John's Lutheran Church in Bittinger, Md., where synod Bishop Ralph Dunkin showed a slide presentation of his travels to the Holy Land. This was followed by bowling and then all returned to Camp Hickory. Sunday the group worshiped at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church in Oakland, Md., before returning home.

Trinity's Table is a ministry of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Charleston, W.Va. Every Sunday at 5 p.m., Trinity opens its doors and invites anyone and everyone who is hungry to come in for a meal. For the next hour between 100 to 200 people find their way to the church to enjoy a hot nutritious meal. All who come receive a welcome, enjoy fellowship and leave with a full belly.

When Trinity's Table began on the second Sunday of January 2010, only one person showed up. That person took 35 meals to residents of the Sojourners shelter, and the next week three people came by. Every week since then, the number of people has

increased, reaching a high of 266 on the Sunday before Thanksgiving.

Thrivent awarded Trinity's Table the \$5,000 grant based on its mission, financial stability, effectiveness in addressing basic needs, and the use of volunteers. Trinity's Table was one of 76 Lutheran organizations nationwide selected to receive funding as part of the \$1.2 million pilot program.

When it received the grant, Trinity's Table also became eligible to participate in an additional \$10,000 challenge grant in which funds raised for the ministry would be matched by Thrivent dollar for dollar, up to \$10,000. □