

Connections – June 2007

“I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:1-4

This is the season of ordinations. At the Synod Assembly I had the privilege to ordain Dan Keck into pastoral ministry for service at St. John at the Bay and St. John, Port Clinton. On May 26, at Shepherd of the Hills in Apple Valley, Minn., Dan Bredburg was ordained for service at Zion, Waterville. Matt Wheeler has been called to serve as pastor at First Lutheran in Galion and will be ordained on July 14 at Holy Trinity, Toledo. Melissa Afdahl and Cindy Getzinger are in call processes leading to ordination. Diane Seaman, recently assigned to this synod, also is involved in a call process. It is a powerful time in the lives of these individuals, in calling congregations, and in the life of the Church.

Ordinations and installations are times of high expectation for pastors and congregations. It is not hard for me to sense the joy and celebration on the part of all participants. In many of these cases the joy and celebration will continue for some time unabated. In others that joy and celebration will be tempered by personality quirks (in pastor and parishioners!), by the discovering of differing expectations, contrasting visions and the sheer reality of human sinfulness. Frankly, that is to be expected. Even the healthiest of congregations and family get “tested” in their relationships.

The ordination and installation services acknowledge that such periods of “testing” will take place in the lives of pastors and congregations. One of the questions that is asked of the congregation is, “Will you pray for him/her, help and honor him/her for his/her work’s sake, and in all things strive to live together in the peace and unity of Christ?”

The congregation typically responds with a strong, “We will” and I wonder and pray that it be so.

The text reflects the understanding of human nature. Pride, abrasiveness, impatience, indifference to the damage of words and deeds can impact the lives of pastor and people.

That being the case, the Holy Writers remind each member of their calling as the baptized people of God. To “...live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called” is, first of all, to acknowledge the worth that God has bestowed upon us in Jesus Christ. Earlier Paul explains: “But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.” (*Ephesians 2:4*)

Such worth is acknowledged and realized when it is reflected in our care for

one another.

We give worth to each other by our attending to the “peace and unity of Christ” even when there are significant matters that separate us. To be indifferent to that truth, is to reject the worth that God has given us in Christ Jesus.

When we are inclined to lead a life that betrays our calling, worship is the means by which God calls us back through the Holy Spirit and in calling us back restores us to one another. The remembrance of baptism, the confession and forgiveness, the preached Word, the sharing of the Peace, and the Eucharist are all means by which God draws us to himself through the cross and resurrection of Christ Jesus and bestows worth upon us. And so, he restores us also to one another that we might lead lives “worthy of our calling” and attend to the shared unity and peace of Jesus Christ.

May that be so in the lives of the pastors, associates in ministries, specialized ministers, lay leaders and congregations of the Northwestern Ohio Synod, particularly in those moments when our peace and unity are tested.

A Prayer: _Gracious God we praise you for the worth with which you have blessed us by claiming us as your own through our baptism in to Christ. Forgive us when we have failed to live lives worthy of that precious calling. Grant us your Holy Spirit and bind us to yourself. By that same Spirit bind us together in the peace and unity of Christ. In his name we pray it. Amen

Thanks To All Who Participated In The Synod Assembly!

What were the highlights of the Synod Assembly? For me there were many. They include: the worship services and ordination of Dan Keck, the installation of Tom Zulick as Director of the Lutheran Planned Giving Partnership of Ohio, and the commissioning of Jasmina Kotasova, a pastoral colleague from our Companion Synod in Serbia, for ministry to Eastern Europeans working on the Lake Erie recreational areas. The presentations of Dr. Wally Taylor on Galatians and that of Pastor Art Simon, from Bread for the World, were outstanding. The adoption of a synod Ethnic Mission Strategy offered direction for our ministry together.

It was a “bitter sweet” moment as we bid farewell to Assistant to the Bishop, Ray Gottschling, Synod Secretary Marilyn Mohr, and other members of the Synod Council even as we welcomed new leadership including Lou Ann Kornowa, as Synod Secretary, Robin Small as Call Process Facilitator, and eight retired pastors including Don Brewer, Glen Stadler, Kurt Meyers, Janine Dress, Art Wilde, Paul DeMoss, David Proctor, and Ted Stellhorn, who will serve as “adjunct staff” in providing pastoral assistance in the synod.

Please check out the [synod's web site](#) for a more detailed review of the Assembly.

Thanks to all who served as participants in this Assembly and all whose good work made it a reality.

Save the date! Next year's Synod Assembly will be May 16-17. It promises to be special. Watch for details in the next months.

A Time For Hospitality

Typically the summer months are a time of transition in the lives of many pastors and congregations. Please make a point of welcoming new colleagues who are new to your area. Take them out for lunch and let them know that you will keep them in your prayers.

Similarly, be attentive to those who are "new" in your congregations. Hospitality is a precious gift that signals something of the "peace and unity of Christ."

And Finally....

Some expressed concern that I got a bit "choked up" during the concluding prayer of the Assembly. That surprised me too! Truth be told, when the prayer was placed over the work of the Assembly I found myself experiencing a powerful sense of God's grace and mercy. The prayer is a favorite:

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with your most gracious favor and further us with your continual help, that in all our works, begun, continued, and ended in you, we may glorify your holy name and finally, by your mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

May the summer months provide you with opportunity to be refreshed by a renewed sense of the grace and mercy with which you are beloved in Christ Jesus.