

November 22, 2010

Some Mohr Jottings

Dear Friends,

It has been an incredibly busy fall but it has been filled with wonderful opportunities to engage, discuss, discern, visit and . . . eat. (In a Reformation Day sermon that focused on the quintessential Lutheran confessional statement that we are justified by God's grace through faith [Article 4, Augsburg Confession], I also jokingly mentioned the other two Lutheran catchphrases: "There's a pot-luck luncheon next Sunday" and "We've never done it that way before.")

I have been privileged to attend four Conference conventions this fall, as well as visit a number of congregations. There are also other events that our bishops are required to attend, and since they have to be squeezed into a relatively brief period on the fall calendar, it has been a challenge to keep enough time open to respond to your phone calls, letters, e-mails and the occasional visitor to synod office. I hope that I have been able to respond to your questions in a reasonable time frame.

There are three sets of meetings that happen on a twice-yearly basis: Synod Council, National Church Council, and the Board of Governors' meeting for the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Saskatoon. In addition, there is a fall meeting of the Conference of Bishops plus the annual mentoring event for rostered ministers in the First Call Program. And for all of you who have encouraged me to make sure that I keep time for family and self, I want to say how much I appreciate your concern and say that yes, I have done fairly well with that, in spite of the intensity of this fall's schedule.

Even though there is a great deal of travel involved (particularly in the month of October) I am buoyed by your prayers and your words of support. As I look back on all these meetings, conferences and visits, I am impressed by the incredible amount of ministry that is taking place throughout our church and am deeply moved by the number of lay people who give of their time and wisdom in service to our Lord and his church.

May God's peace be with you all.

Bishop Greg Mohr

Synod Council Initiatives

Our Synod Council met in early September and we had an excellent three-day session. Prior to that meeting, I had given council members a homework assignment, wherein they would each have 10 minutes at the meeting to answer the following questions:

1. From your perspective, what are the things we need to focus on as a synod?
2. What are some suggestions as to how we should go about achieving that?
3. What are the strengths you bring to synod council? (Modesty is not an option for your presentation.)

Their responses formed part of the analysis that we undertook to examine our ministry within the synod and to identify those things on which we must focus in the coming year. With the

significant reduction in synod office staffing (i.e. there is no longer an Assistant to the Bishop position) we recognize that there are structural and strategic changes that have to be made.

Three broad areas of action were identified (I'm only including a couple of examples under each category; much more was discussed and recommended):

1. Human Resources (establish a focus group to review the roles and responsibilities of the Bishop and staff; review the governance and administration of the synod)
2. Connecting and Communicating (place a priority on the Bishop being able to visit congregations; revive Communications committee; increase sharing of stories, ideas and resources; develop study materials for congregational councils)
3. Discipleship, Mission, Engagement and Renewal (train resource people to help lead redevelopment and renewal process within synod and in congregations; facilitate development of young adults' conference; identify a "synod work project")

In light of the staffing changes, Synod Council re-instituted the practice whereby synod council members would serve as liaisons with synodical committees. Through a process of discernment (remember point #3 in the homework assignment?) we made the following assignments:

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| • Campus Ministry/UBC Board | Armen Petznik |
| • Communications | Jan Schulz and Rev. Roland Ziprick |
| • Faith and Society | Rev. Carol Dennison |
| • Missions | Rev. Eric Krushel |
| • Stewardship | Rev. Jim Whaley |
| • Worship | Kim Emmet |
| • Youth | Rev. Sam Voo |

(And just so you know we didn't forget anyone, the Officers of the synod will not serve as committee liaisons – they already have ample on their plate! They are: Vice-chairperson Darlene Johnson, Secretary Rev. Cliff Reinhardt, Treasurer Stephen Holmes, and myself.)

Congregations in Transition

(my apologies if I have missed important information)

- **St. John's, Oliver** Please keep the people of St. John's in your prayers. They voted in early November to disband as a congregation and we are in the midst of attending to all the final details. A monthly communion service will still be offered in the coming year and prayer services will take place at other times. There is a small but tight-knit group that gathers regularly and they wanted to make this decision while they could still officially conduct their congregational meetings. With all the development happening within the Interior, who knows what the future might hold for ministry in that area. Let us be attentive to the spirit's leading.
- **Faith, Burnaby** The congregation voted last month to have their church council "begin the process" toward dissolution. A final discernment and vote has yet to be taken. Your prayers are coveted. Such moments are difficult and we pray for God's guidance and insight as to what the future should entail.

- **Mt. Zion, Smithers** The congregation has stepped out in faith (financially and otherwise) and has issued a letter of call to Rev. Margaret Powell to serve them on a half-time basis. Rev. Powell, an Anglican priest, also serves a neighbouring community.
- **Living Faith, Sechelt** The congregation continues with the call process.
- **St. Paul, Maple Ridge** The congregation also continues with the call process.

Alban Institute Webinar “Crunch Time in the Small Church”

I highly recommend that pastors and congregations make the effort to access a “webinar” series produced by the Alban Institute. Entitled, “Crunch time in the Small Church,” this series examines the situations in which many congregations find themselves and provides detailed and helpful advice as to the steps that should be taken to evaluate, envision, and address these issues. The Greater Vancouver and Lower Fraser Valley ministerials met jointly on two occasions this fall to listen to all three presentations. I have heard that they found the second one particularly helpful.

Check out <www.alban.org>, click on “Education” and select “On Demand Webinars.” Scroll down the page to find “Alice Mann.” The three webinars are:

- #1 We Can’t Keep Going Like This
- #2 What Choices Do We Have
- #3 Let’s Not Go It Alone

First Call Program

In early October, I participated in this year’s “First Call Program” 4-day retreat. A relatively new program in the western synods of the ELCIC, this event brings together those who are in the first three years of ministry following ordination or consecration. It is comprised of course work, a mentoring component, a directed reading list, and three and a half wonderful days spent with four synodical bishops to discuss and reflect on a myriad of things pertaining to ministry. I had a wonderful time working with these new pastors and deacons of our church and I am looking forward to next fall’s event.

Fall Conference Conventions

Four of the synodical Conferences held their annual conventions this fall; the Northwest and Peace River Conferences held a joint convention in June. Elections for Deans and Conference councils were undertaken in most Conferences. The following pastors have accepted the call to serve as Deans:

- Northwest Rev. Jim Whaley
- Peace River Rev. Tim Johnson
- Southern Interior Rev. Patricia Giannelia
- Vancouver Island Rev. Gary Schenk
- Greater Vancouver Rev. Marlys Moen

- Lower Fraser Valley Rev. Dean Andersen (which, given our penchant for referring to pastors by their first names, provides the BC Synod with its first “Dean Dean”!)

I’ll attach to this e-mail the sermon I preached at three of the fall Conference conventions so that all might have opportunity to “hear” that sermon. I based it on that interesting text from Jeremiah where he has the opportunity to purchase his ancestors’ land. All of this is done in the midst of war, imprisonment, and impending destruction.

Two Interns In Turn

We are honoured to have two seminary interns ministering in our synod this academic year. Lori-Anne Boutin is working with Pastor Brian Heinrich at Lutheran Urban Mission Society in Vancouver’s downtown eastside.

John Boyd is interning at St. Paul, Prince Rupert, which also involves ministering to the communities of Lord of Life, Sandspit, and Mt. Zion, Smithers. John is learning firsthand what northern hospitality is like.

Planned Giving working group

Several lay and clergy have begun meeting to lay the groundwork for a renewed emphasis on planned giving within our church. They meet again in early December to continue their work. First and foremost, Planned Giving is not about fund-raising nor about a congregation’s survival; it is about mission. It is designed to complement the other ways by which we faithfully support the work of the church through our offerings. Planned Giving can provide a long-term, stable source of funds for ministry, and is an excellent way by which we can each leave a legacy gift for our church.

Gifts from the Heart 2010

The “Gifts from the Heart” catalogues have been distributed to congregations by Canadian Lutheran World Relief. Included are ministries within our BC Synod. Please consider making a Christmas gift to one or more of the ministries listed there.

Augusta Victoria Hospital Video

Check out the CLWR (Canadian Lutheran World Relief) website at www.clwr.org and take a look at the 5-minute video about the work that Lutheran are supporting in providing critical health care in Palestine and East Jerusalem.

Bishop's Schedule for late FALL 2010 and WINTER 2011

Nov	2	Planned Giving working group meeting Study Conference planning meeting (telephone conference)
	5	Shepherd of the Valley, Comox Hope, Nanaimo
	6	Confirmation class, Hope, Nanaimo
	7	Worship, Trinity, Powell River
	9	family Funeral, Calgary
	11-12	(Concerts with Chor Leoni; thank you for your encouragement to continue singing with this choir; it is a wonderful avocation!)
	14	LTS (seminary) Board of Governors, Saskatoon
	16	Study Conference planning meeting (telephone conference)
	16	BC Synod AGM at Good Shepherd, Coquitlam
	18	Call committee meeting with Living Faith, Sechelt
	21	Worship, Christ, Chilliwack
	23-29	Holidays
	30	Call committee meeting at Maple Ridge
Dec	1	Officers' meeting
	2	Bishops meet with Structural Renewal Committee, Winnipeg
	4	travel to Victoria
	5	Worship and Advent program, Church of the Cross, Victoria
	7	Study Conference planning meeting
	8	Planned Giving working group meeting
	8	Stewardship Committee meeting (telephone conference) (tentative)
	12	Worship, Oakridge, Vancouver
Jan	16	Worship, Redeemer, Vancouver
	20	Worship, chaplaincy at SFU
	23	Worship, King of Life, Coquitlam
	30	Worship, Mt. Olivet, North Vancouver
Feb	6	Worship, First, Vancouver
	9	Visit to Matsqui Correctional Institution; Rev. Pam Pederson
	17-20	Synod Council meeting, Surrey
	18-19	All Synod Committee meetings with Synod Council, Mt. Olive, Surrey
	24-25	Western Synods Examining Committee, Saskatoon
Mar	6	Worship, Peace, Vernon (tentative)
	9	Ash Wednesday
	27-30	Study Conference
	31	Conference of Bishops
Apr	1-3	National Church Council meeting; also some meeting with Anglican Church's Conference of General Synod; Toronto
	22	Good Friday
	24	Easter