

**Report of the Bishop  
Western Iowa Synod Assembly  
May 1 & 2, 2010**

*"We know that all things work together for good for those who love God."*  
Romans 8:28

The constitution of the Western Iowa Synod (WIS) describes the role of the bishop as:

+S8.12.b "Have primary responsibility for the ministry of Word and Sacrament in this synod and its congregations, providing pastoral care and leadership for this synod, its congregations, its ordained ministers, and its other rostered leaders."

+S8.12.h of this Synod's constitution says, "that the bishop shall practice leadership in strengthening the unity of the Church and in so doing: 1) Exercise oversight of the preaching, teaching, and administration of the sacraments within this synod in accord with the Confession of Faith of this church; 2) Be responsible for administering the constitutionally established process for the resolution of controversies and for the discipline of ordained ministers, other rostered leaders, and congregations of this synod."

As of this writing, I, as well as senior synod staff members and the synod Vice President, Gerald Clausen, have participated in over fifty gatherings around the synod where there has been significant disagreement even among congregation members themselves, who are not of one mind regarding actions taken at the 2009 Churchwide Assembly around matters of human sexuality. The primary issue has been on how the Bible does or does not address those in publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships being received on the rosters of the church, and allowing for their availability for call.

My observation is that these days of discourse have brought out the best and worst. At times heated rhetoric amongst us has only confirmed for those outside looking in, that the church is not able to get along. That the energy around this issue has robbed this church's capacity to invest its resources in addressing myriads of other issues also pressing for the church's attention. Perhaps that is the worst. But the best, it would seem to me, is that we as ELCA Lutherans have the freedom (within our understanding of what it means to be the church) to debate the issues, work the process, express our differences, make our case, and when unable to come to a common understanding, still have room within salvation by grace to continue to receive each other as redeemed sinners at the Lord's table.

As of this writing, five WIS congregations have completed voting to leave the ELCA because, as they have described it, they believe this church is pursuing a steady trend toward liberalism. They wish to realign themselves with stronger orthodoxy, and have pursued relationships with LCMC, LCMS, CORE. What I have observed, for those who have left or are taking a vote to leave, is a sadness on one hand, but also an urgency in their step. That they are being unified in their quest for emancipation from a relationship with the ELCA which believes that the Gospel calls it to be a public advocate and witness in the world.

The reduction in mission support by WIS congregations has been substantial, resulting in a significant reduction of Churchwide Mission Support. Synodically this has meant a significant across the staff salary reductions. For all coordinator or bookkeeping staff it has meant a reduction in hours. And yet in spite of the energy around the matter of human sexuality, there has been no reduction in the requests from congregations for synod resource. For the

churchwide organization it has meant a significant reduction in programming, and several hundred positions have been eliminated. This will have a significant impact on this church's capacity to be as strong of a mission leader as in the past both here in the U.S. and throughout the world.

And yet in spite of these challenges there are rays of joyful hopefulness. Last summer, the Tour de Revs World Hunger event raised \$11,651 in the WIS alone. Over \$250,000 has been given by members of the WIS for the Center for Agricultural Development in Tanzania. Nearly a half million dollars in mission support was shared with the ELCA last year. As a synod we were able to honor our commitment to the four campus ministry sites around the state, an estimated 425 WIS youth attended the National Youth Gathering, and an estimated 375 WIS youth attended the fall ConFest events. Over \$40,000 was given by congregations last year to Lutheran Services in Iowa.

Additionally, the Synod Council, the Lay School of Ministry, the Academy for Administration, the Candidacy Committee, Women's Organization, active boards and committees, Intentional Interim Support Group, Dean/Chaplain Colloquy, and First Call Theological Education continue as staples of Synod resource to congregations.

Thanks to the skilled work of Pastor Danette Johns, call coordinator, the number of congregations active in the call process is lower than usual with a significant number of new pastors who have taken calls in the synod. Pastor Peter Soli is particularly gifted in working in congregational settings to build communication and a common vision. Pastor Rodger Prois, whose position is funded by the churchwide organization, has added a new measure of energy in working with raising up leaders and congregations as faithful stewards, as well as helping congregations embrace Transformational Ministry. The formation of new shared ministry partnerships also continues.

Because congregations have begun to ask for help to restore a sense of community, the synod has begun to lay the groundwork for developing healthy/helpful conversations among the congregations. And while this strategic pathway is yet unclear, we are being intentional to gain the training and equipping for the unfolding of this process in the coming year.

It has been a year unlike any year I have served in this office. I am grateful that in the midst of significant unsettledness, most have been able to receive me and/or other synod staff with courtesy and respect as we are out in congregations presenting. I so appreciate that even in those events where the conversation has been intense, there are those who take the time at the end of the day to shake my hand, offer appreciation for our coming, and a sincere wish that we can find our way through this bristly continuing discourse.

Finally, a word of affirmation for those serving on the Synod Council. Not only has their time and commitment been a generous and strong asset to the leadership of the synod between assemblies, but their wisdom and engagement has been invaluable.

As with Paul, we can all take considerable comfort in the assurance that "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God."

Yours in Christ,  
+ Bishop Michael A. Last

## Ordination Anniversaries

### 5 years

Pastor Dawn Quame

### 10 years

Pastor Rod Hopp

### 15 years

Pastor Barbara Hansen

Pastor Barbara Jewell

Pastor Rodger Prois

Pastor Marsha Smith

Pastor Peter Soli

### 20 years

Pastor Pete Petersen

Pastor Steve Smith

Pastor Paul Stone

Pastor Mark Youngquist

### 25 years

Pastor David Grindberg

Pastor Jeff Swanson

Pastor Vance Toivonen

### 30 years

Pastor David Cox

Pastor Ted Eilders

Pastor Ron Nelson

Pastor Al Wicks

Pastor Kathy Wicks

### 35 years

Pastor Steve Ellerbusch

Pastor Wayne Garman

Pastor Dennis Grohn

Pastor John Hagberg

Pastor Steve Hetzel

Pastor Dennis Meyer

Pastor Arlyn Norris

### 45 years

Pastor Peter Boe

Pastor Duane Olson

Pastor Paul Sorlien

Pastor John Swenson

### 50 years

Pastor David Kramer

Pastor Harold Heinzig

Pastor Virtus Stoffregen

### 55 years

Pastor Dale Roseke

Pastor Herbert Hanson

## Commissioning Anniversaries

### 60 years

Sister Ingeborg Blomberg

## Anniversaries of Congregations

### 75 years

Faith, Griswold

### 100 years

Immanuel, Akron

### 125 years

Trinity, Hardy

St. John, Palmer

*(Please let the synod office, 712-732-4968 or wisip@wisynod.org, know of any omissions in this list. Thank you!)*

**Roster Update**  
**April 1, 2009 to April 1, 2010**

**Pastors New to the Western Iowa Synod:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
Pastor Wayne Garman	Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada	Good Hope, Titonka
Pastor Karen Goltz	New England Synod	Trinity, Merville
Pastor Ray Holmquist	Southeastern Iowa Synod	Retired/Good Shepherd, Adair
Pastor Judith Johnson	South Dakota Synod	American, Melvin
Pastor Martin Lucin	Southwestern Minnesota Synod	Grace, Spirit Lake
Pastor Yvonne Marshall	Central States Synod	Our Savior's, Council Bluffs
Pastor Rodger Prois	Southwestern Minnesota Synod	Western Iowa Synod Staff
Pastor Peter Soli	Southeastern Minnesota Synod	Western Iowa Synod Staff
Pastor Jackie Ziemer	Southwestern Minnesota Synod	Immanuel, Titonka; Grant & St. John's, Woden

**Western Iowa Synod Pastors Accepting Calls Within Synod:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
Pastor Tony Ede	Bethany & Immanuel, Kimballton	Trinity, Webster City
Pastor Steve Hetzel	Faith, Onawa	Emmanuel, Shenandoah; St. Paul, Northboro

**Seminary Graduates Accepting Western Iowa Synod Calls:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>To</u>
Pastor Benjamin McIntire	Salem, Creston
Pastor Sarah Nye	Plymouth Ministries (St. John, Akron; St. John's, Craig; St. John, Merrill)
Joel Nye, Diaconal Minister	Plymouth Ministries (St. John, Akron; St. John's, Craig; St. John, Merrill)

**Western Iowa Synod Pastors on Leave from Call:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>From</u>
Pastor Lil Johnston	Skien, Sloan
Pastor David Olson	St. John, Corwith
Pastor John Riggle	St. Paul, Hull
Pastor Barb Spaulding	Immanuel, Forest City

**Western Iowa Synod Pastors Retiring:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>From</u>
Pastor Gary Boen	First, Clarion
Pastor Barbara Jewell	Partners in Faith Ministries (Bethel, Graettinger; Wallingford, Wallingford)
Pastor Stan Peterson	Samuel, Eagle Grove; Holmes, Holmes

**Western Iowa Synod Pastors Accepting Calls in Other Synods:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
Pastor Paul Baglyos	Wartburg Theological Seminary	St. Paul Area Synod
Pastor Charlene Cox	Waldorf College	Southeastern Iowa Synod
Pastor James Demke	Our Savior's, Rock Valley	Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Pastor Amy Fondroy Eich	Christ, Jefferson	Northwest Synod of Wisconsin
Pastor Dan Gerriets	Christ, Le Mars; St. Peter, Brunsville	Northeastern Iowa Synod
Pastor Russell McDowell	Western Iowa Synod Staff	Nebraska Synod

**Western Iowa Synod Retired Pastors Moving to Other Synods:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>To</u>
Pastor Maynard Moen	Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod
Pastor Larry Rehlander	Minneapolis Area Synod
Pastor Dean Sudman	Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod

**Western Iowa Synod Pastors Removed from the ELCA Roster:**

<u>Name</u>	<u>From</u>
Pastor Craig Bock	St. Luke, Sioux City
Pastor Paul Breddin	St. Olaf, Bode

**Western Iowa Synod Congregations Voting to Leave ELCA:**

St. Olaf, Bode
Samuel, Eagle Grove
Emmanuel, Fontanelle
United, Shelby
Skien, Sloan
Stratford, Stratford

## **In Loving Memory:**

### **Pastor Ray Roden**

*“Blessed are the dead who from now on die in the Lord. ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labors’...” (Revelation 14:13).*

Pastor Raymond M. Roden passed away on Saturday, August 29, 2009, in Fort Dodge. Pastor Roden had suffered from declining health for the past year. A funeral service was held Tuesday, September 1, 2009, at Grace Lutheran Church, Fort Dodge.

Pastor Ray Roden was born December 2, 1922, in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. He graduated from high school in 1941, and subsequently served four years in the U.S. Navy during World War II. After the war, Pastor Roden earned a bachelor’s degree from Pennsylvania State University at Millersville and taught Junior High School several years in Lancaster.

Pastor Roden attended Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg and was ordained on June 13, 1955, at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church, Lancaster. His first call was to Emmanuel Lutheran, Lancaster, and in 1958 he accepted a call to Bergstrasse Evangelical Lutheran in Ephrata, Pennsylvania. Trinity Lutheran, Webster City, called Pastor Roden in 1966, and he served there until his retirement in 1989. In recognition of Pastor Roden’s 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ordination, former Bishop Curt Miller commented, “Your ministry has always been one of clear proclamation of the good news of forgiveness and life through Jesus Christ. You have provided solid and ongoing faithful pastoral care. You have consistently acted to build up the church as a witness to the gospel in the community.”

Pastor Roden continued serving long after his retirement, in spite of several surgeries and other health concerns. He served as interim pastor at Grace Lutheran, Fort Dodge; Badger Lutheran, Badger, and Stratford Lutheran, Stratford, and did pulpit supply for many years in the Fort Dodge area. In addition, he led numerous Bible studies, taught confirmation, and served as Conference Chaplain and on several synod committees. A tireless community volunteer, Pastor Roden in recent years served on the Habitat for Humanity committee and the M.L. King “Living the Dream” committee in Fort Dodge.

Pastor Ray Roden is survived by his wife of 62 years, Evelyn, a son and daughter, six grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

### **Pastor A.G. “Gerry” Dyste**

*“I am the resurrection and the life,” says the Lord; “he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die” (John 11:25-26a).*

Pastor A.G. “Gerry” Dyste passed away on Tuesday, January 19, 2010, at his home in Forest City. A memorial service was held at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 23, 2010 at Highview Christiania Lutheran Church, 26690 Highview Ave West, Farmington, MN 55024.

Pastor Gerry Dyste was born in Greenbush, Minn., on August 18, 1930. He spent his childhood in Minnesota and graduated from St. Olaf College with a BA in History in 1952. Following graduation from Luther Seminary, Pastor Dyste was ordained into the American Lutheran Church on May 27, 1956. His first call was to Ryder-Roseglen-Emmet Parish, N.D., where he served from 1956-1958, followed by a call to Roseglen-Emmet Parish, N.D., from 1959-1962. Subsequent calls included Our Savior’s, Bonner, Mont., 1962-1966; First, Bottineau, N.D., 1966-1974; and Highview Lutheran, Farmington, Minn., 1974-1991. In 1991, Pastor Dyste accepted a call as Associate Pastor at Immanuel, Forest City, where he focused on outreach, visitation, and senior ministries. After his retirement in 1994, Pastor Dyste served as interim pastor at First, Clarion; Good Hope, Titonka; and Bethlehem, Buffalo Center.

A highlight of Pastor Dyste’s ministry was his time as an exchange pastor in a Norwegian congregation, Horten, Norway, from 1985-1986, where he was able to use his fluent Norwegian. A lifelong student of history, Pastor Dyste earned an MA in History from the University of Minnesota in 1989. He also served as an adjunct professor at Waldorf College, Forest City, from 1991-1995, teaching five different courses.

Pastor Dyste wrote in 1996, “I think others would describe me as an all-around pastor. As far as my ministry style is concerned I believe that I am what the Norwegians call an ‘altmulig mann’ (literally an everything is possible man). I have worked hard at everything instead of limiting myself to one or more specialties. Where success has come in my ministry, however, it has probably grown out of a sense on the part of the people that I really loved them and enjoyed being with them.” He commented that his father told him not to be one of those ‘scoldy’ preachers and he tried to follow that advice and to live ‘grace’ in his sermons as well as in all aspects of his ministry.

Pastor Dyste is survived by his wife of 51 years, Sonya, two children and several grandchildren.