

# Praxis\*

\*(prak'sis) *n.*, 1. Practical application or exercise of a body of knowledge.

**February 2006**

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## COUNCIL MEETS



*(left to right) Bishop David Mullen, Vice President Larry Moeller, Secretary Kathy Werfelmann*

**T**he Synod Council meeting at Mercy Center in Burlingame included worship led by Pr Moses Penumaka (South Asian Mission Developer), reports, business & budget considerations, and times of silent prayer. The prayer time is preceded by the sound of a gong and all maintain silence. The gong sounds every 45 minutes. One minute later the gong sounds again and the meeting resumes. This prayer practice tradition is a part of every council meeting.



*Two guests joined the meeting to update the council on Mt Cross. Interim Executive Director Jerry Olstad (right) and Pr David Johanson, (left) Board member, reported on the Strategic Plan 2006-2009 received by the Council.*

The Mission Statement of Mt Cross Ministries is:

**Igniting passionate faith, Equipping servant leaders,  
Spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ**



### **CALL IT WHAT YOU MAY - THE ENJOYMENT MAKES THE DAY**

*Pr. Lauren "Bud" Egdahl, Synod Stewardship Specialist*

**W**e've been waiting for our tickets for a partial season of the San Francisco Ballet. For some years we have been attending with another couple, and prior to that we actually ushered at the Opera House for a number of years.

Having just finished reading a review of the gala opening night of this season, I must confess that I encountered a number of words which were all "Greek" to me – words like: double pirouettes and double cabrioles, fiendish fouette turns and grand jetes. I didn't have a clue.

Then I realized such a lack has not diminished my enjoyment of a ballet, nor my respect for the athleticism of the dancers. Awesome. And just maybe being better informed would heighten the experience.

There are lots of folks in our pews on a Sunday who may lack all the nuances of our theological speak about stewardship, but for whom the offering time is a highpoint in worship.

They know they are participating in God's Mission. They are cheerfully responding to their experience of God's generosity. They are confident that their offering will be used to make a difference in the lives of some other people, whether across town or around the world, whether in their congregation or through their Synodical or Churchwide partners.

We may (read: should) enhance their joy and understanding with strong Biblical stewardship education. They deserve that. And it is holy work.

But let us salute and respect the love of the Lord that impels them, encourage them on the way, and walk that walk with them as examples all the way.

Wonderful discoveries lie that way, such as those Easter Day disciples experienced on the road to Emmaus.

**Salute the  
cheerful  
responders!**

## ***Bishop's Message***

*Bishop David G. Mullen, Sierra Pacific Synod*

### **WELCOME TO CHURCH AS WELCOME TO CHRIST**

**S**imply joining a church because it's the thing to do is no longer a major factor in most people's reason for seeking a church. The experience now is one of hungering and thirsting for meaning and purpose in life, something much more than getting one's name on the membership roster of a congregation.



In welcoming “seekers” into the church as a faith-full community it needs to be clear right from the start that they are and will be taken seriously just as they are. It is just as important to let the welcome be extended over time. This is based on the simple confidence that being a Christian is about living in Christ, and there are no quick fixes; indeed it is a life-long process!

Guiding and nurturing seekers into the life of Christ therefore should not be rushed. Discernment of their nature and progress in the things of the faith is an art based on trust in God, and the patience, humility and realism faith brings about in us. Whether before baptism (as in the Catechumenate process) or after (another time-honored practice) the idea is that every one needs a sponsor and a year or more of loving, gentle catechesis or “formation” as preparation for and the baby steps into a life-long journey as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The welcome represented by the local congregation not only must be patient, but also authentic and attentive. Each inquirer will have his or her own narrative of their life experience: successes, suffering, addictions, fears, hopes, disillusionments and grandiosities, life stories that need to be heard, accepted and understood deeply in order to guide the God-seeker more clearly to Christ.

Thus, if welcome to church means welcome to Christ, we who are the church are challenged to live incarnately like Christ—not with a slick template about what a “real Christian” must look like, but as representatives of the Good News of divine love and forgiveness for sinners (messed up human beings). Whether long time members or newly welcomed seekers, the goal is to become in Christ, humble, realistic, and yes, joyous “card-carrying members” of the human race: we welcome others as Christ first welcomed us--warts, and gifts, and all.

And in such welcome, we experience wondrous, yes apostolic, joy!

## Witness and Service Discipling Team

*Richard Stahlke, Chair*

*Witness & Service  
Discipling Team*

***Chair***

**Mr Richard Stahlke**

***District A***

**Rev Jim Goldsmith**

***District B***

**Ms Elizabeth "Beth" Mora**

***District C***

**Ms Kathryn Sizemore**

***District D***

**Ms Eva Woodall**

***District E***

**Rev Ron Kreiensieck**

***Conference Dean***

**Rev Michael Mechsner**

***At Large***

**Rev John Goldstein**

***At Large***

**Rev William Knezovich**

**T**he Witness and Service Discipling Team is one of three Synod Discipling Team and is the one that focuses on new mission starts, partnership support grants and on-going ministries, continuing to learn with the national church, how to build healthy, multiplying congregations as we seek to share Christ with the world.

During 2006 two new ministry starts will be undertaken in conjunction with Grace Lutheran in Richmond and at Fernley, Nevada. In addition, during the 2005 - 2006 biennium, a number of ministries received grants through the Synod Outreach Fund. Those grants were made to assist outreach to the Hispanic communities at Divina Gracia in Fresno, Pueblo de Dios in San Jose and to develop multiple Spanish language ministries in the greater Sacramento Area. Additional grants went to the South Asian community in Newark and to the house church startup at St. James in Redding.

Presently the Team is focusing on developing long term directions for its work and expects to have recommendations ready for the Synod Council later this year. Among the areas of concern and discussion for the team are transformational congregations, including those that are very much at risk in terms of survival, and small town and rural ministry. In addition, the Team is exploring its relationship to service and advocacy concerns of Synod. The realities of limitations in the Synod budget seem likely to affect some of the efforts that have been in consideration. For all of the Discipling Teams, including Witness & Service, it is very important to remember that each Teams work is only one piece of the Synods ministry expression. Every congregation and every member is part of the whole of our Lutheran outreach as we strive to build God's kingdom.

### **LUTHERAN ADVOCACY MINISTRY IN NEVADA (LAMN) UNITES TWO SYNODS OF ELCA**

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Nevada (LAMN) began in 1991 and serves both Sierra Pacific, covering Northern Nevada, and Grand Canyon, which includes Southern Nevada. The LAMN governing council has been reconstituted with recent board appointments by both synods. Pr. Jack Ericson will serve as the new President of LAMN.

The partnerships will be strengthened with Lutheran Social Services of Nevada whose Executive Director is Jaime Weller-Lafavor and with LSS Northern California/Northern Nevada represented by Mary Carlson.

LAMN's Interim Director, Larry Struve, met recently with Bishop Mullen and Mark Carlson, Director of LOPP, and Lynette Stott, Director of the ELCA Advocacy Office of the Division for Church in Society. Mr. Struve briefed Bishop Mullen on the activities of LAMN, and discussed Synod support of advocacy ministry, even in times of tight budgets. Bishop Mullen participated in the creation of a letter from Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson, signed by all 65 ELCA Bishops, and sent to the members of Congress, opposing cuts in needed social programs in the federal budget. The letter began: "We write to you as religious leaders seeking justice for millions of vulnerable and dispossessed people in our nation." The letter was read into the Congressional Record, and had considerable impact in easing some of the budget cuts.

LAMN has requested financial support in the 2007 budget of both synods, so that the momentum begun in 2005 may continue.

#### **A Life Changing Presentation!**

Stories of individual lives battered by circumstances, but touched by Lutheran relief efforts will be shared by Kathryn Sime, Director, ELCA World Hunger and Disaster Appeal. Come and hear the stories of what your gifts are doing to change lives. The World Hunger and Disaster Appeal acts domestically and internationally to assuage the "silent disaster of chronic hunger and poverty," says Sime. It responds both to emergencies and to the root causes of hunger, and speaks "a prophetic voice in the U.S. and around the world."

The Synod Hunger Network is sponsoring the presentation by Kathryn on **Saturday, February 25<sup>th</sup> at 2:30 p.m.** at Holy Cross Lutheran, 1020 Mocho Street, Livermore, California 94550. A reception will follow. (Access maps and directions at the church website <http://www.holycrosslivermore.org/>.)

For more information about the presentation, or the work of the Synod Hunger Network call or email Edie and Denny Lott at (530) 582-5382 or [thelotts@tlpc.org](mailto:thelotts@tlpc.org).



[prayers@spselca.org](mailto:prayers@spselca.org)

Prayer Ventures depends on you—not only for prayers, but also your prayer requests. Please e-mail your requests to [prayers@spselca.org](mailto:prayers@spselca.org) or call us. Remember to practice forgiveness when we err and let us know about errors and omissions.

**Prayers for: Professor Robert Smith** (retired PLTS) under treatment for leukemia; **Trudy Schaefer and family** at the death of her husband retired **Pastor Herbert Schaefer**.

## ROSTER CHANGES

**Bruce Lundberg, to retirement**  
**Roy Yuen, to Life Lutheran Church, Richmond**



## Congregations in transition

**Key:** (1) Forming Call Committee, (2) Developing Profile, (3) Interviewing, (4) Calling

| Congregation                           | Interim Pastor |
|--|----------------|
| Auburn, Bethlehem (1)                  |                |
| Antioch, St John's (2)                 |                |
| Granite Bay, Resurrection (2)          | John Ridenour  |
| Hollister, Trinity (3)                 | Frank Starkey  |
| Livermore, Holy Cross (2)              | Don Haven      |
| Los Altos, Immanuel (1)                | Jan Womer      |
| Los Banos, St John's (2)               | Roger Lee      |
| Merced, Shepherd of the Valley         | Carl Bengston  |
| Orangevale, Christ the King            |                |
| Orinda, Lamorinda Korean               | Jae Guen Lee   |
| Palo Alto, Grace (2)                   | John Kerr      |
| Pleasant Hill, St Mark's (2)           | Lyle Beckman   |
| Porterville, Trinity (3)               | Russ Mueller   |
| Sacramento,                            |                |
| Church of the Master (3)               | Dick Smith     |
| San Jose, St Timothy's (Associate) (3) |                |
| Santa Rosa, Thanksgiving (2)           | Lorents Flak   |
| Stockton, Zion (1)                     | Stan Niemi     |
| Ukiah, Grace                           |                |
| Vacaville,                             |                |
| Shepherd of the Hills (4)              | Bob Willse     |

*NOTE: Congregations engaged in a self study process, or on hold for various reasons, are not listed.*

*Close up of the altar at Faith Lutheran in Chico.*

## February

- 6-8 Synod Staffs Region II Retreat
- 8 Leadership Discipling Team
- 11 LSS Valentine's Day Dance
- 17-19 Mt Cross-Middle & High School event
- 20 President's Day-Office closed
- 21 Assembly Planning
- 21-23 First Call Theological Education
- 25 Hunger Event, Livermore  
Word/Sacrament Discipling Team

## March

- 3-8 Conference of Bishops
- 6-7 Society of the Holy Trinity Retreat
- 10-12 PLTS Youth Spring Retreat
- 14 Discipling Team Chairs & Bishop's staff
- 25 Young Men Missing Event
- 31 3-6th grade Mt Cross retreat



*Jon Perez (center) was ordained in December by Rt. Rev Romero, Episcopal Bishop (interim) El Camino Real Diocese (left) and Bishop Mullen (right). Pr Perez serves Epiphany Lutheran and Episcopal Church in Marina.*

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To receive the Synod weekly e-mail, "Byte of Synod" send a note to [info@spselca.org](mailto:info@spselca.org)