

*Praxis**

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

Sierra Pacific Synod 2006 Assembly

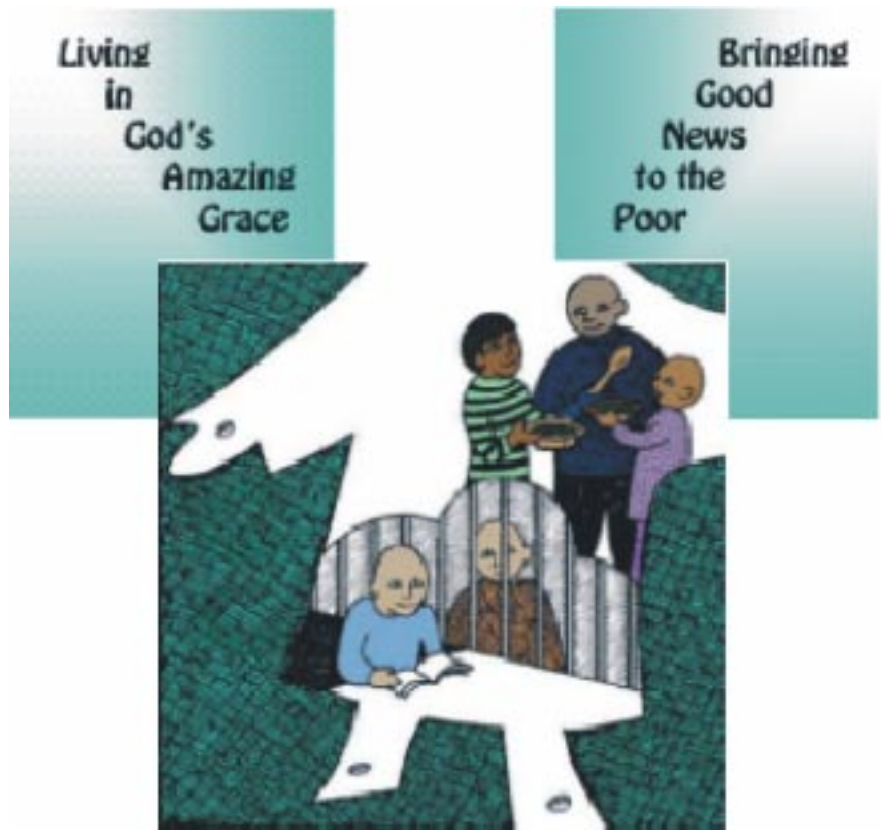
May 19-21

May 2006

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A RITUAL OF REMEMBRANCE

Pr. Lauren "Bud" Egdahl, Synod Stewardship Specialist

There's a big difference between doing something because "you have to do it" and doing something because "you choose to do so."

The Old Testament teachings about stewardship included the Tithe and First Fruits giving. We tend to think of those two as "you have to" ways of giving. You know, it's the law.

When we do that, most of joy is sapped right out of our giving. So take another look at a rich passage in Deuteronomy, and see what God really intended.

Deuteronomy 8 begins with encouragement to God's people to live God's will "...that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers."

Verse 8-10 is a litany of the wealth and abundance that this land will provide: "...a land in which you will eat bread without scarcity, in which you will lack nothing...."

"...And you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land HE HAS GIVEN YOU." (vs 10) All is a gift from God's love and generosity.

But God knows that is easy to forget. God knows the power of good times and wealth to lead us astray. So vs 11 begins: "Take heed lest you forget..." Vs 17 sums it up: "Beware, lest you say in your heart (Note: we would never say it outright) 'My power and the might of my hand have gotten me this wealth.' You shall REMEMBER your God; for it is God who gives you power to get wealth."

And so tithing and first fruits giving become a way of remembering – a ritual of remembrance of the One who gives it all in the first place. (See Deut. 26:1-10 and Deut 30)

The first word in Genesis "In the beginning" is the Hebrew word be-resheth. The word for first fruits is resheth. First of all, God did the giving. In response and remembrance we offer the first fruits – our resheth to God's be-resheth.

Joy in giving lies down that path of life.

**LEST WE
FORGET**

Bishop's Message

Bishop David G. Mullen, Sierra Pacific Synod

REGION II PARTNERSHIP: MISSION, THINKING AND PLANNING!



It is often said that faith is personal, but never private. The statement encourages us to see that in matters of faith, we are embedded in a larger reality. The first step toward the larger reality is the congregation. But the congregation does not exist in isolation. The ELCA constitution reminds us that

"congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization ... shall be interdependent. Each part...is not the whole church and lives in a partnership relationship with the others." ELCA Constitution 8.11

We understand our life together as one of partnership with others across the nation. One of the ways partnership develops is by an "in-between" relationship of churchwide and synods called a region. Again, this is expressed in the constitution:

...regions ... a partnership between groups of synods and the churchwide organization ... exercising mutual responsibilities. 18.01

... a means for coordinated responses by synods and the churchwide organization to mission and program opportunities within the region. 18.11.11

The Sierra Pacific Synod (Northern California and Northern Nevada) is in the partnership of Region 2, encompassing the southwest area of the United States: the Rocky Mountain Synod (Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, New Mexico, and the El Paso, TX area), the Grand Canyon Synod (Arizona and South Nevada), the South West California (including the Los Angeles area), and the Pacifica Synod (southern California-including San Diego-- and the Hawaiian Islands).

In April, I spent three days in Denver in the partnership work of Region 2, and one more day in Las Vegas at a "Cost of Land" consultation. Unlike some meetings I attend, those were four good and useful days witnessing and contributing to the mission of the ELCA in the vast territory we encompass.

The first two days was a mobility conference, held regularly in the region. Interviewing and identifying dynamic rostered leaders to serve the missional needs of the church in Region 2 is an engaging task.

The Bishop (cont'd)

Bishops and staff members find these conferences extremely helpful, enabling us to get to know those somewhere in Region 2. Those interviewed report back to us how helpful this is to them.

The third day was a consultation on mission outreach. This partnership of synods and the churchwide expression of the church has evolved into a relationship of mutual respect and shared commitment to the mission of the church. I am impressed and excited by the vision of the five synods, and of our churchwide partners, Prs Dick Magnus and Ruben Duran.

We were reminded nine mission starts were approved for Region 2. And, there are plans for over two dozen future starts among the synods including Hispanic, Korean, Armenian, Vietnamese, Finnish, Asian, Tanzanian, Ethiopian, Arabic, Lao, and suburban style ministries. This is a sign of the strongly multi-ethnic culture in which we live and of a shared vision for mission.

We shared concern about many of our existing congregations and the future shape of the church in our region. In coming years, each synod faces a number of church closures. In the great mix of cultures and changing demographics in our cities, new approaches to mission and ministry must be developed

Along those lines, there was lengthy conversation on the "post-modern world", and the phenomenon of the "emerging church" - attempts to honor the apostolic roots of Christian faith communities and develop new forms of "church" in the 21st century. We learned that across the ELCA there are currently 10 such ministries, most of them growing. The Rocky Mountain Synod is looking at the formation of an emerging church ministry in the Boulder area or downtown Denver. There are creative missional efforts already underway in this Synod, but we need to encourage more "outside the box" vision for mission. Our Synod Assembly, will feature two proponents/practitioners of the emerging church, Pr. Karen Ward and Dr. Nathan Frambach. Their keynote presentations can spur us to think about possibilities in our synod.

Next, I spent several hours at the "Cost of Land" gathering in Las Vegas. Synod Vice President Larry Moeller had graciously consented to organize that meeting. The purpose was to understand what we face as we think about the cost of land as it relates to starting new congregations in our region. In some areas land now costs a million dollars an acre or more! In that context, how shall we proceed in mission?

Synod bishops, staff, and officers listened as experts in government process, real estate people, development attorneys, and financial professionals offered their knowledge and expertise on this question. The bottom line for me was this: as partners in the region, we need to do a lot better job of long range planning-and by that I mean thinking ten to twenty years down the line and develop a shared, strategic, realistic plan for future mission and ministry in the region.

Yes, it was a lot of meeting time, but these were good, useful, inspiring meetings. May God continue to bless the Region 2 ELCA partnership in mission for the sake of the good news of Jesus Christ.

WHEN IS A CONGREGATION NOT A CONGREGATION?

Does that sound like a strange question? It might if you think of a congregation as a group that is formally organized and affiliated with a church body. But, the question may not sound strange if you are part of a SAWC—a Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community. ELCA bylaws provide for synods the option of acknowledging certain worshipping communities as related to the synod and part of the synod's life and mission. These can include developing ministries, preaching points or chapels, and the Sierra Pacific Synod has a number of such SAWC's.

At their last meeting, the Witness & Service Discipling Team decided to recommend to the Synod Council that SAWC status be renewed for five ministries within Synod. All currently hold that status, and recommendation for renewal and subsequent action by the Synod Council must happen annually. The recommended renewal is for the following ministries: 1) Grace Lao Lutheran Mission, Richmond, 2) Mountain Lutheran, Groveland, 3) Mountain Ranch Lutheran, Mountain Ranch, 4) Truckee Lutheran Presbyterian, Truckee, and 5) Hope Lutheran, Tracy.

In addition, a sixth ministry in Fernley, Nevada that had SAWC status has been moved to "ministry under development" status, a further step toward formally organizing a congregation. Such a move to formally organize is not always part of the progress of a SAWC group. The issue is mission and the question is what can best advance Christ's mission among the people served.

Bishop Mullen and Team Chairs

Bishop Mullen at left and Ann Watkins (Word & Sacrament), Todd Bertani (Leadership), and Richard Stahlke (Witness & Service)

These leaders meet quarterly with Bp Mullen and his staff, reviewing work accomplished and looking ahead to future plans.



Witness & Service

Chair

Mr Richard Stahlke

District A

Rev Jim Goldsmith

District B

Ms Beth Mora

District C

Ms Kathryn Sizemore

District D

Ms Eva Woodall

District E

Rev Ron Kreiensieck

At Large

Rev John Goldstein

At Large

Rev William Knezovich



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 or call us. Remember to practice forgiveness when we err and let us know about errors and omissions.

Prayers for Healing: Pr Martin Wager (retired) on dialysis;

Comfort of the gospel for:
Muriel Herhold and family at the death of her husband, retired Pr Robert Herhold.

ROSTER CHANGES

Removed from the roster:

Neil Gladen

Dale Kempainen

Jean Lebbert



Congregations in transition

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

Congregation	Interim Pastor
Auburn, Bethlehem (1)	Dan Hodgson
Antioch, St John's (3)	
Elko, Faith	
Granite Bay, Resurrection (2)	John Ridenour
Hollister, Trinity (3)	Frank Starkey
Livermore, Holy Cross (3)	Don Haven
Los Altos, Immanuel (1)	Jan Womer
Los Banos, St John's (4)	
Merced, Shepherd of the Valley	Carl Bengston
Modesto, Emanuel	Roger Lee
Orangevale, Christ the King (3)	Kirk Shipley
Orinda, Lamorinda Korean (2)	Jae Guen Lee
Palo Alto, Grace (3)	John Kerr
Pleasant Hill, St Mark's (3)	Lyle Beckman
Reno, Good Shepherd (Associate) (1)	
Sacramento, Church of the Master (3)	Dick Smith
San Jose, St Timothy's (Associate) (3)	
Santa Rosa, Thanksgiving (2)	Lorents Flak
Stockton, Zion (2)	Stan Niemi
Ukiah, Grace (2)	Allen Dunn

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

Farewell Reception at the Reagan Library

Luther Luedtke and his wife Carol, were honored at farewell events in March. He has left California Lutheran University after fourteen years as president to become the CEO of Education Development Center, a non profit educations organization in Newton, Mass.

Carol and Luther were presented with a beautiful plate, designed by Linnea Wong, Davis.

Synod Calendar

May

- 13 Commencement, Pacific Lutheran
Theological Seminary
- 18 Synod Council
- 19-21 Synod Assembly
- 22 Office Closed
- 25 Ascension of Our Lord
- 29 Memorial Day, Office closed

June

- 4 Day of Pentecost

July

- 2,3,4 Multicultural Youth Leadership &
Definitely Abled Youth Leadership
- 5-16 Cruzando! ELCA Youth Gathering,
San Antonio



Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson (center) with his two predecessors ; Rev H. George Anderson(left) and Herbert Chilstrom (right) All three were speakers for the Hein Fry Lecture series at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley last month. They also spoke at the other 7 seminaries of the ELCA.

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Pr. F. Noreen Meginness, Editor, Bob Stewart, layout. Items may be submitted for consideration by the 1st of the preceding month.

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