



Christ at the Center is Essential

by Bishop Michael A. Last



By the time this newsletter arrives, the Advent Season will be well along the way and the joyful news of the Savior's coming will be on the horizon, just in time to lift our hearts afresh with the news that because Jesus the Savior lives,

we too shall live.

As bishop of the synod it has been difficult to watch polarities develop in and among the people I have served for ten years as a pastor in synodical service. My heart aches as people form strategies and make decisions, sometimes fanned by others, not even members of this church, who are intending to coach the responses of pastors and churches in an attempt to draw them out of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. This is also painful because in some cases these are congregations and pastors with whom synod staff have worked closely in the call process, or in rectifying internal strife in the past. But that which is particularly disturbing, is an ungracious spirit in some places that is not characteristic of the Christian community, and which, it would seem, is not reflective of Christ at our center. In his writings, C.S. Lewis tells of Screwtape, a senior devil, who writes to his nephew, Wormwood, a devil in training. "There is nothing like suspense and anxiety for barricading a human's mind against God."

Writes Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "Jesus stands pro me. He stands there in my place, where I should stand, but cannot. He stands on the boundary of my existence, beyond my existence, yet for me. Thus Christ is at one and the same time, my boundary and my rediscovered centre. He is the centre, between 'I' and 'I', and between 'I' and God. The boundary can only be known as boundary from beyond the boundary. In Christ,

one recognizes it and thereby at the same time finds our new centre again."

An attempt to explain Christ at the center is many faceted. Explaining it is as complex as trying to explain the Trinity or Real Presence in Holy Communion. Bonhoeffer says, "The individual stands between law and fulfillment. We have the law, but we cannot fulfill it. Now Christ stands where man has failed before the law. Christ as the centre means that he is the fulfillment of the law. So he is in turn the boundary and judgment of humankind, but also the beginning of our new existence, its centre. Christ as the centre of human existence means that he is our judgement *and* justification."

As I have been present with well over a thousand individuals attending synod gatherings these past months, I have observed the finger pointing and listened to the rhetoric of advocates on both sides of the debate around issues of human sexuality, and it seems we are at a stalemate. Contrary to all the arguments and Bible quoting, there have been very few conversions to a new position through all the polemics. Writes Bonhoeffer, "Christ as the centre of human existence means that he is the judgement and justification." On occasion, what I have been hearing from those opposed to change as well as those who affirm change, is judgment or condemnation. But Lutheran understanding is that Christ stands where we have failed.

People of bound conscience find themselves pulled in both directions. Literally, some have become ill with the heartache this discussion has evoked in their congregations. They are confused by Bible verse proof texting meant to shore up points of view or by the loss of those whose line in the sand threatens many years of friendship in the name of a holy crusade.

Jesus, at the center of this Advent and Christmastide, would warn us that we are on shaky ground with a self-perceived righteousness that

**Because
 Jesus the
 Savior lives,
 we, all of us
 who bear
 his mark,
 shall live
 too.**

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Global Programs Report

by Cindy Wells, Western Iowa Synod Global Programs Coordinator



HATUA KWA HATUA/STEP BY STEP COMPANION SYNOD HIGHLIGHTS

2010 WIS GROUP TRAVEL TO TANZANIA:

A wonderful array of thirteen people will be traveling to the Southern Diocese of Tanzania during the summer of 2010! Trip goals include to grow in one's understanding of the companion synod relationship, to deepen our knowledge and love of one another, to learn about the Southern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania and its ministries, to see and experience the various partner projects in which we mutually engage, to share and receive gifts from one another, and to return transformed and energized to deepen this companion synod relationship within the Western Iowa Synod. Please keep this group in your thoughts and prayers as they prepare for this important journey.

PROJECTS UPDATE:

WELL PROJECT:

Plans are in place for the new well-drilling equipment and five-ton ex-military truck to be fully outfitted, tested, and on a sea container headed for Tanzania by the end of this year! Once it has cleared customs, the Western Iowa Synod Well Team will be prepared to travel to Tanzania to train the local drilling team on its use and maintenance. Several wells will be drilled during this time, and several more are envisioned on the horizon as this effective and efficient equipment is put to use. Clean, disease-free water is essential to one's very existence. One community well can serve as many as 20,000 people from area villages. The drilling of one well costs approximately \$2500-\$3000 USD. Many wells are needed and we pray for your continued financial support. We are blessed to partner in this vital, life-saving effort.

CENTER FOR AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT (CAD):

A wonderful fundraising event was held last August at the Clay County Regional Events Center, with much learning, multicultural expression, partnering, and spiritual connecting. Please be attentive to any financial pledge commitment that you have made. With these funds, we are able to begin the implementation phases. A first demonstration plot has just been planted, showcasing various crops under various control

factors, and generating much local smallholder interest and excitement in CAD. Work is being conducted on technological, electrical, and water systems, as well as on the renovation of existing buildings for use as classrooms and guest houses. Simultaneously, the devising of the board, steering committee, staff, curriculum, and funding plans are evolving. We are thankful as our agricultural connectedness brings us together as One in Christ through this project.

MEDICAL INITIATIVES:

The various happenings in this realm include: scholarship funding for **Jason Mtokoma** (\$2900/yr) toward his medical school expenses. After receiving his degree, Jason will return to serve in the diocesan hospital for five years where his gifts and knowledge will be widely needed and appreciated. **Ten \$500 microscopes** are being sought for use in hospitals, medical centers, nursing schools, and dispensaries (note that three have already been provided!). **Industrial laundry equipment** is direly needed for Ilembula Lutheran Hospital and School of Nursing to improve sanitary and work conditions. All of these efforts strengthen the health and well-being of our companions.

IGUMBILO LUTHERAN GIRLS SECONDARY SCHOOL:

The first class proudly graduated from the Ordinary Level of secondary education (i.e., the first four years) in the fall of 2009! Students are generally testing very well in their national exams. Another new class will begin in January 2010, bringing us nearly to capacity. While many needs still lay before the school in the areas of facility, supplies, and faculty, considerable progress is being made that greatly affects the lives of these girls. Some will go on to two more years of advanced secondary training in hopes of eventually attaining a university education. Some will go on to vocational technical training. Some will return home to enter the work force as opportunity is afforded them. In all cases, this extended base education is key to furthering economic development for these students and their communities.

All of these projects necessitate ongoing financial support. Contributions may be made payable to the Western Iowa Synod with the project name in the memo and sent to PO Box 577, Storm Lake, IA 50588. Please direct any questions you may have to Cindy Wells, Western Iowa Synod Global Programs Coordinator, at 712-732-4968 or wiscw@wisynod.org. Asante sana (Thank you very much)!

Western Iowa Synod Mission Statement

The mission we share as the Western Iowa Synod is to energize and shepherd congregations and their leaders to tell about Jesus Christ and to serve together in Christ's name.

(Continued on page 3)

World Hunger Needs Your Help!

Did you know:

- 1 billion people, 1/6 of earth's population, is chronically hungry;
- 200 million children have suffered stunted physical and mental development because of hunger;
- 17 million families in our country experienced hunger during the past year;
- The ELCA's World Hunger goal is declining from \$21 million this year to \$19 million next year;
- Our Western Iowa Synod's World Hunger giving has declined from \$114,908 in 2004-05 to \$66,470 in 2008-09?

Our synod's World Hunger Team is reactivating — with the goal of increasing congregation response in overcoming hunger — and we would like your help:

- Join our team (call 515-576-4106)
- Watch the E-Spirit for hunger updates;
- Check out World Hunger bulletin inserts on synod Web site;
- Participate in our Synod Assembly Run-Walk-Write-Pray World Hunger Emphasis (every voting member is asked to join in at least one activity).

Before year's end, consider a Change for Hunger Sunday in which all loose change in the offering plate is given toward the ELCA World Hunger Appeal.

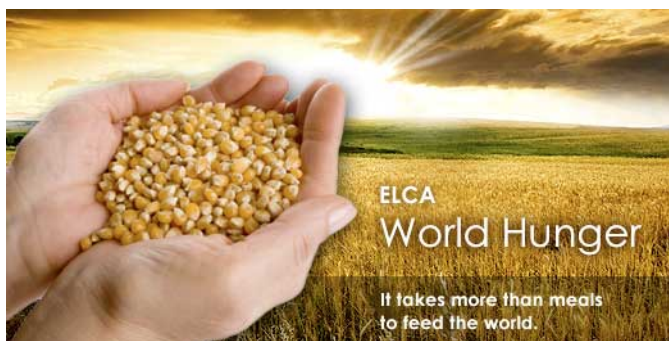
Together, we can make a difference in overcoming hunger!

Western Iowa Synod Hunger Team:
Ann Johnson, Russ Melby, Danette Johns
(Staff), Matthew Martens (Chair)

ELCA World Hunger Leadership Gathering

This annual gathering was attended by approximately 50 Hunger Leaders from across the ELCA and was held at The Lutheran Center in Mexico City. The setting provided wonderful opportunity to accompany those truly experiencing hunger and justice issues. Many people working to educate about hunger and to promote change shared their knowledge and expertise. Much was learned about globalization, NAFTA, immigration, advocacy, Sabbath economics, etc., within the realm of hunger and food insecurity.

We visited with various community groups and projects working to thwart the causes and ill-effects of hunger, as well as to empower people to make change. In particular, we walked with the Mexican organization of Amextra, which recently celebrated 25 years of transforming



marginal communities and changing lives.

Amextra accomplishes its goals through holistic programs of community health, education, income generation, natural resource restoration and conservation, emergency relief, and training of local leaders. These projects are proposed and sustained by the communities themselves. Many of the Amextra efforts are supported by World Hunger funding for which all are truly grateful.

ELCA hunger leaders then returned to engage more fully in hunger fundraising, education, advocacy, and/or transformational activities within their local communities. Thank you for all that you do to support ELCA World Hunger efforts — it truly makes a difference in the lives of many! Anyone with a passion and desire to serve God in the area of world hunger on a synodical level should contact Pr. Danette Johns, Western Iowa Synod Assistant to the Bishop, at wisdj@wisynod.org or 712-732-4968.

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Global Missions

A rejuvenated committee is being formed to address the area of Global Missions of our church, seeking ways to transform and build up the global body of Christ as we relate, serve, pray, learn, support, and worship with Lutheran Christians in the world. This is accomplished through the primary concept of accompaniment (walking with one another). In the Western Iowa Synod context, this committee work is outside of the companion synod relationship, e.g., missionary sponsorship, global formation in congregations, global Lutheran initiatives (ONE Lutheran Campaign, Lutheran HIV/AIDS Strategy, Lutheran Malaria Initiative), etc. If you or someone you know has particular gifts and passion for global mission work, please inform Cindy Wells, Western Iowa Synod Global Programs Coordinator, 712-732-4968; wiscw@wisynod.org.

Tools for Service

2010 Academy for Administration

The 2010 Academy for Administration is scheduled for Saturday, February 13, at Buena Vista University, Storm Lake. This daylong event offers several short courses designed to help equip church leaders to better serve in congregations. Instructors have been recruited from churchwide staff, industry, synod staff, and area congregations.



The Academy will be of interest to congregation council members, parish secretaries and communicators, rostered leaders, and lay leaders. “I found the mutual ministry course very helpful. I learned lots of

things about what the committee does. I give it a 5!” reported one of last year’s participants.

The daylong event convenes at 9:15 a.m. with worship and a presentation by the Rev. Rodger Prois, Director for Evangelical Mission for Western Iowa Synod. Following the group presentation, classes will be offered during three 90-minute teaching blocks. The last class will end at 3:45 p.m. This year’s offerings include courses related to worship planning, financial accounting and payroll, fundraising, working with difficult people, background screening and checks, being a first call congregation, disaster preparedness, and leading council meetings.

Registration is \$50/person with a maximum of \$200/congregation. All materials and lunch at Buena Vista University are included in the registration. Registration will be by congregation. A registration form is included in this newsletter and is available online at www.wisynod.org. Advance registration is encouraged, but we

expect to be able to accommodate some registrations at the event. Please submit your registration by Monday, February 1.

Course List (Please go to www.wisynod.org for more detailed course descriptions. Offerings are subject to possible change.):

Session 1: 10:30-12:00

- Disaster Preparedness 101
- ~~Non~~ Less Anxious Meetings
- Planning Worship with Integrity
- Managing Risks – Boundary Issues and More
- Beyond the Bake Sale (Financial Giving)
- How to be an **Exemplary** First Call Congregation [Session 1 of 3]

Session 2: 12:45-2:15

- Disaster Preparedness 101
- ~~Non~~ Less Anxious Meetings
- Worship Nuts and Bolts – Copyrights, Bulletins, etc.
- Managing Risks – Boundary Issues and More
- Graciously Applauded Approved Practices (GAAP) Finance
- How to be an **Exemplary** First Call Congregation [Session 2 of 3]

Session 3: 2:15-3:45

- Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Council Meetings but Were Afraid to Ask
- Hot Tips for Dealing with Difficult People
- Worship Nuts and Bolts – Copyrights, Bulletins, etc.
- Beyond the Bake Sale (Financial Giving)
- The People Side of Congregational Finance
- How to be an **Exemplary** First Call Congregation [Session 3 of 3]

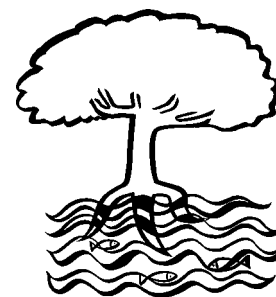
Living Well Retreat

For rostered leaders

March 11-12, 2010, Okoboji Lutheran Bible Camp

Need a day to get away, relax and share with your colleagues? If you are curious about how you can live a centered life as a whole person of God, this day is for you. You will deepen your understanding of healing and wholeness as well as examine how to live a simple, yet abundant life.

The day will include worship, devotions, speakers, activities and music by Jon Ylvisaker. The Rev. Phil Blom from the Board of Pensions will help you discover the many wellness tools available to you along the way. And you will return home renewed and inspired for the journey. Enclosed is a registration flier.



Energizing Ministry

By Lynn Egesdal, Education, Youth & Family Ministry Coordinator

This summer more than 37,000 youth and adults gathered in New Orleans for the National Youth Gathering. Watching crowds and crowds of people descend upon the Superdome each evening for a gathering time with guest speakers and music was an absolutely amazing experience. The energy in the dome was *more*



than amazing. The youth in attendance were great. On each of three days, 12,000 people were bused to different parts of the city for service projects. We did not know exactly what type of work we would be doing or where we were going, but I did not hear one complaint. Everyone was willing to work and make a difference for the people in New Orleans.

On Oct. 7, more than 250 confirmation-age youth and adults participated in an annual ConFest event at St. John Lutheran, Le Mars. At ConFest, youth gather together for worship and to meet the bishop. These events have been held for the past three years and have been a huge success. Each year between four and six hundred youth and adults attend ConFest events across our synod.

The energy that is generated from a gathering like this is just amazing. And to think that they are all Christians who can make a difference in this world is so encouraging to me. If we could bottle up this energy and send it to eastern Iowa, New Orleans, or Africa to do service projects and mission outreach, just think of the wonderful things that could be accomplished! These young people are not only the future of our church, they are the here and now ministry of our church. They have so much to offer if we just give them the chance — the energy, knowledge and faith to care for and change the world.

One hundred and fifty junior high youth gathered for the Junior High Gathering in November. This was yet another group of wonderful

youth from the Western Iowa Synod. They sang, participated in worship and small group discussion, and even worked on service projects in the afternoon, ranging from raking at the camp, picking up sticks and garbage in the park, baking cookies for college students, to making blankets for children at Beloit Residential Treatment Center. These youth know the meaning of service and are willing not only to hear the word of God, but are willing to be doers of the word (James 1:22).

Voting members at the ELCA Churchwide Assembly this summer approved a constitutional change that provides a 10 percent goal for youth and young adult participation at synod assembly, on synod council, and on synod boards and committees. We have already been working toward this goal in the Western Iowa Synod. *This year, we challenge all of our congregations to bring more than one youth to synod assembly.*

The 2010 synod assembly will be a festival assembly, and the energy of the youth will help to make it just that. This is a great way for youth to connect with the wider church, to learn the process of the church, and to help celebrate the great ministry that is happening in the Western Iowa Synod. Each congregation is allowed one voting youth member, so there should be a minimum of 163 youth present at our synod assembly. We have some wonderful young people in our congregations. Let's bring them together and show them what an amazing church body they are part of within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Please support your youth and invite them to be a major part of the ministry of the larger church. I look forward to seeing many youth at Synod Assembly the first weekend in May!



2010 ConFest

Congregations in the Call Process as of 12/3/09

Congregations Beginning the Call Process:

Our Savior's, Albert City
Trinity United Lutheran Ministries — Eagle Grove
Evangelical / Ullensvang, Thor / South Enes,
Vincent
Samuel, Eagle Grove / Holmes, Holmes
Faith, Onawa

Congregations in Self Study:

St. Paul, Missouri Valley
Immanuel, Rock Rapids
Our Savior's, Rock Valley

Congregations Completed Self Study:

Kanawha, Kanawha
Zion, Rake

Congregations in Interview Process:

St. Paul's, Atlantic (associate)
St. John, Corwith
Our Savior's, Council Bluffs
St. John, Council Bluffs (associate)
Emanuel, Dayton
Bethany & Immanuel, Kimballton
Grace, Spirit Lake

Congregations in Area Conversations:

St. John, Albert City
Exira, Exira
Christ, Jefferson

Exploring Shared Minister/Ministries:

Ascension, Coon Rapids

Long Term or Intentional Interim:

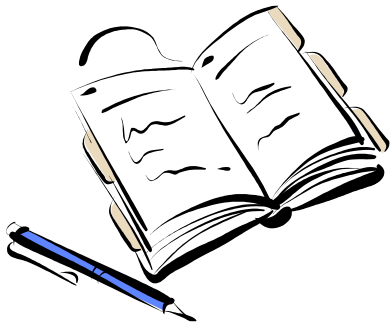
Trinity, Alta
Estherville, Estherville
Partners in Faith Ministry — Bethel, Graettinger /
Wallingford, Wallingford
St. Luke, Sioux City

Calls Extended:

Trinity, Merville
Emmanuel, Shenandoah / St. Paul, Northboro

Calls Accepted:

Emmanuel, Shenandoah / St. Paul, Northboro —
Pastor Steve Hetzel



Mark Your Calendars

Spirituality Retreat

January 24-27, 2010
For Western Iowa Synod rostered leaders.
Registration included as insert in this newsletter.

Lutheran Men's Retreat

February 5-6, 2010
For all Western Iowa Synod men.
Registration included as insert in this newsletter.

Academy for Administration

February 13, 2010
For all congregation leaders and future leaders.
Registration included as insert in this newsletter.

Living Well Retreat

March 11-12, 2010
For Western Iowa Synod rostered leaders.
Registration included as insert in this newsletter.

Spouse Retreat

April 16-18, 2010
All spouses (male or female) of rostered leaders
are welcome! Registration included as insert in
this newsletter.

2010 Synod Festival Assembly

May 1-2, 2010
Sioux City Convention Center
Mark your calendars and plan to attend!

Prayer Requests

- **LeAnn Ede**, recovering from heart valve replacement surgery.
- Girls in the **first graduating class** of the Igumbilo Lutheran Girls School.
- Family and friends of **Pastor Richard Fruehling**, who passed away Nov. 13. Pr. Fruehling served Christ, Le Mars from 1950-1953.
- All those affected by the state's 10 percent **funding cuts and the Electrolux closings** in Jefferson and Webster City.
- **Pastor Sara and Erik Jensen**, proud parents of a new baby girl, Asta.
- **Pastor John Lee**, suffering from medical complications following a car accident.
- **Pastor Craig Miller** and family, at the death of his mother, Betty Miller.
- Those affected by the **seasonal flu and H1N1**.
- Family and friends of **Jan Sherer**, wife of Pastor Steve Sherer, who passed away on Dec. 6.
- All those affected by the **shootings at Fort Hood**.
- Our brothers and sisters in **Tanzania** as the country suffers from **drought** and subsequent water and food shortages.
- Family and friends of **Keith Wold**, husband of Pastor Kay Wold, who passed away Nov. 24.

Seminars, Conferences and Continuing Education

- **Preaching Lent & Easter**, January 28, 2010, Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque. Features Dr. David J. Lull. Go to www.wartburgseminary.edu (under Lifelong Learners).
- **ELCA Head of Staff Seminar**, February 4-7, 2010; **Ministry Staff Seminar**, January 30-February 2, 2010; and **Transition Seminar**, February 2-3, 2010. For more and registration, visit www.elca.org/leadership/events.
- **“Hearing the Word: Teaching the Bible in the Parish & Beyond,”** Hein-Fry Lecture Series. Susan Briehl at Wartburg Seminary February 2, 2010; Mary Hess at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago on February 18, 2010; and David Rhoads at Luther Seminary April 22, 2010. These lectures are open to the public. Visit each seminary’s Web site for details.
- **29th Annual Rural Ministry Conference**, March 7-9, 2010, Wartburg Seminary. Theme is “Nurturing Generosity.” Go to www.wartburgseminary.edu (under Center for Theology and Land) for brochure and registration.
- **Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice**, March 19-22, 2010, Washington, D.C. High-impact weekend will focus on immigrants, refugees and displaced peoples. Go to www.advocacydays.org.
- **Robert B Gronlund Stewardship Lecture Series**, April 16-17, 2010, Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque. For clergy and lay leaders, this event features Dr. Mark Allan Powell and provides practical and in-depth learning opportunities for stewardship leadership. Call 563-589-0327 or e-mail lifelonglearners@wartburgseminary.edu.
- **Youth & Family Ministry Certification School**, May 2-8, 2010. For adult leaders, volunteers, clergy, youth and seminary students who have a passion for youth ministry. For more information, visit www.wartburgseminary.edu (go to Center for Youth Ministries page).
- **Master of Arts in Theology / Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy**, new degree program offered by Luther Seminary and Saint Mary’s University. Application deadline is July 1; those wishing to be considered for financial aid must apply by March 1. Contact Dr. Gary Wilkerson at gwilkerson001@luthersem.edu or 651-592-6470.
- **Youth in Mission** programs, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, summer 2010. Three-week exploration of vocation for high school sophomores and juniors. Also available are week-long service trips for youth. Visit www.lstc.edu/yim.
- **Lutheran Summer Music Academy**, June 20-July 18, 2010, Luther College, Decorah. For high school band, orchestra, choir and keyboard students. Provides rigorous music study and performance program in a nurturing environment. More details at www.lutheransummermusic.org.
- **Luther Academy of the Rockies**, June 21-July 1, 2010, Meeker Park, Colo. Continuing education combined with free time for participants and their families in the Rockies. Visit the Wartburg Seminary Web site, www.wartburgseminary.edu, for details.
- Continuing education courses are offered by both Wartburg Seminary and Luther Seminary. Check their Web sites, www.wartburgseminary.edu and www.luthersem.edu, for listings.

Synod Calendar — January / February / March 2010

Jan. 1-3	Senior High Event, Okoboji	Feb. 5-6	LMM Retreat, Twin Lakes Christian Center
Jan. 7	Candidacy Committee	Feb. 11	Chaplains & Deans Colloquy
Jan. 15-16	Lay School Retreat	Feb. 13	Academy for Administration, Buena Vista University
Jan. 19	Companion Synod Committee	Feb. 20	Synod Committees
Jan. 20	Hunger Team, Grace, Fort Dodge	Feb. 25	Finance Committee
Jan. 21	Colleague Group	March 11-12	Living Well Retreat, Okoboji
Jan. 23	Executive Committee	March 13	Synod Boards
Jan. 28	Intentional Interims	March 19	Executive & Finance
Jan. 24-27	Spirituality Retreat, Okoboji	March 20	Synod Council
Jan. 29-31	Youth Leader Retreat, Okoboji		

Visit the synod Web site, www.wisynod.org, for a complete synod calendar.



May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Romans 15:13

Christmas blessings from your Western Iowa Synod staff!

Front row, left to right: Pastor Rodger Prois; Kay Broich; Pastor Danette Johns.

Second row, left to right: Cindy Johnson; Michelle Talbott; Cindy Wells; Bishop Michael Last; Pastor Peter Soli.

Back row, left to right: Irene Pfannkuch; Lynn Egesdal.

Health Assessment Offered Again in 2010

Western Iowa Synod congregations will again have the opportunity to receive a 2 percent discount on the health contributions they make for their pastors and other employees in 2010.

To receive the discount, 65 percent of those with ELCA primary health care coverage must complete the Health Assessment by April 30, 2010. In 2009, 63 percent of those eligible in the Western Iowa Synod completed the Health Assessment.

If the 65 percent goal is reached by April 30,

(Continued from page 1)

claims exclusive knowledge of the mind of God, "that only the one who is without sin may cast the first stone." Instead, we must look to Christ who is the center and the fulfillment of the law.

This is my hope and prayer for this Christmas: that we may regain perspective, draw closer to Jesus as our Redeemer, offer one another a gracious peace, and agree that on this matter we will 'agree to agree.' Because Jesus the Savior lives, we, all of us who bear his mark, shall live too, and it is in this that we find what is essential for sustaining our unity.

all Western Iowa Synod congregations will be able to take advantage of the 2 percent discount on their 2010 health contributions retroactive to January 1, 2010. If the 65 percent goal is not reached by April 30, 2010, the 2 percent discount opportunity closes.

For more information on the Health Assessment and the 2 percent discount offer, visit the ELCA Board of Pensions Web site, www.elcabop.org, or contact the Board of Pensions at 800-352-2876.

Spirit is a quarterly newsletter published by the Western Iowa Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), The Rev. Michael Last, Bishop. Congregations may reprint newsletter articles for congregational use. *Spirit* is also available on the Western Iowa Synod Web site, www.wisynod.org.

Ideas, stories and photographs of interest to Western Iowa Synod members are welcome. Submission deadline is the first of the month prior to the month of issue. Submissions, prayer requests, questions, and comments should be directed to

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**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**
God's work. Our hands.