



Evangelical
Lutheran
Church in America

The VISTA

A PUBLICATION OF THE SOUTHWESTERN TEXAS SYNOD

500940

www.swtsynod.org/thevistaprint

Vol. 165, No. 3
Fall 2017

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FAITH WATCH

Calls and other position openings are available at www.swtsynod.org/callspositionopenings

St. Paul Lutheran Church in Mason will present **"The Journey to Bethlehem"** drive-through Christmas luminary from 6:30–7:30 p.m. on Dec. 10 at Fort Mason City Park. Admission is free.

"Season of Light," the 2017 Christmas Vespers service of word and music, will feature the Texas Lutheran University Choir, TLU Women's Choir, Kantorei Chamber Choir, and the TLU Symphonic Winds and Percussion. Christmas Vespers will be held in TLU's Jackson Auditorium at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 1; 7:30 p.m. Dec. 2; and 4 p.m. Dec. 3. Tickets for each Vespers service are free but required.

www.tlu.edu/events/christmas-vespers-2017/ Another Vespers service will be held at 4 p.m. on Dec. 10 at St. Martin's Lutheran Church in Austin. No tickets are required.

"Worship at the Center: Journey from Ash Wednesday to Easter" will be held Feb. 1–3 at St. Martin's Lutheran Church in Austin. (773) 380-2590 or bethann.lynn@elca.org

The **Bluebonnet Conference Women of the ELCA gathering** will be held on March 10 at St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Ander. Registration will open in January.

The 2018 **Tri-synodical Theological Conference**, originally scheduled for January in Houston, has been cancelled.

Advertise in *The Vista* and reach 12,795 synod households in the Southwestern Texas Synod. jdellis1961@gmail.com

God calls the church forward as an inclusive community

By Deacon John Dellis

This issue of *The Vista* continues the "Called forward together in Christ" theme, this time looking at how God calls us to be an inclusive church. Articles in this issue focus on being an outwardly focused church, the theological and cultural competence of leaders, our church leadership profile, and how we can address discrimination and oppression.

Photos and information from synod congregations describe how they celebrated the 2017 "God's work. Our hands." dedicated day of service, reaching out to neighborhoods and community in a variety of ways.

The 2017 Synod Assembly approved the creation of the Tiemann Endowment Fund for Leadership Development, which will honor Bishop Ray and Debbie Tiemann for

Called Forward Together in Christ

what will be 39 years of service in this synod. The endowment fund will provide a continuous stream of annual gifts to the synod to support the leadership development of congregational lay leaders and also pastors and deacons.

A planning team has been working since July to develop resources for the endowment fund. An initial article about the new endowment fund is on page 3. A giving envelope will be included in the Winter issue of *The Vista*.

Several months ago, I met with Bishop Ray Tiemann and Pastor Sue Briner to share that the time has come for me to

conclude my work and service as editor of this publication. Serving as editor is and has been a joy and privilege. I'll say more in the Winter issue.

That issue will be the final issue of *The Vista* as a quarterly print publication mailed to members' home mailing address. A synod council task force is currently discerning how the synod will continue to share news and information with congregations and their members. Watch for those announcements soon.

Deacon John Dellis serves as editor of *The Vista*.

Congregations celebrate "God's work. Our hands." dedicated day of service

The annual "God's work. Our hands." dedicated day of service is an opportunity to celebrate who we are as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America: one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor.

Many congregations and their members served in a variety of ways on Sept. 10 or other days selected by congregations.

Service activities offer an opportunity for ELCA members and friends to explore



On Sept. 10, "God's work. Our hands." for some congregations meant joining hands together for the sake of mission and service. House of Prayer, Shepherd King, Gethsemane, Hope, St. Andrew, Resurrection and Amazing Grace in San Antonio packed over 50 disaster kits for those hardest hit by Hurricane Harvey. They still had more than \$1,000 collected to donate to disaster relief efforts.

one of our most basic convictions as Lutherans: that all of life in Jesus Christ—every act of service, in every daily calling, in every corner of life—flows freely from a living, daring confidence in God's grace.

First, Gonzales children, youth and education and youth board members and parents delivered dozens of cookies to the nursing staff at The Heights of Gonzales and Texan Nursing.

Members of First, San Marcos packed a total of 23 buckets filled with flood-relief supplies to send to Hurricane Harvey victims in and around Houston. This was

part of a larger effort by the Lutheran disaster response group, Upbring. First Lutheran's council president and Texas Lutheran University student, Caitlin Cost, brought the effort to the congregation after hearing about it through TLU's Center for Servant Leadership.

La Posada Providencia in San Benito is an emergency shelter for men, women and families who flee to the United States due to political oppression, natural disaster, and other life-threatening actions in their native countries. Members of Grace,

See *GWOH*, page 7



Raina Lee and Keith Samples of Zion Lutheran Church in Arneckeville prepare meals to serve at Christ's Kitchen in Victoria.

FROM THE BISHOP



“Called Forward Together in Christ” is the theme of the new strategic directions of the ELCA. In The Vista’s Spring issue, we learned how we are called “to become a thriving church, spreading the Gospel and deepening faith for all people.” The Summer edition focused on our call “to become a church equipping people for their Baptismal vocations in the world and this church.” For this Fall edition, we will center on what it means to be an “inclusive church, which is outwardly focused with theological and culturally competent leaders.”

We know statistically that it has been difficult for the ELCA to live into our vision of a church who is at least 10 percent people of color or primary language other than English. Even after almost 30 years, we remain at only about 9 percent, despite many initiatives and emphases to increase those numbers.

Part of what we have learned over those years, which has become more clearly visible in our society as of late, is that structural and systemic racism has been part of our struggle. Our congregations tend to look more like how they were founded, with families of our German and other European ancestors, rather than reflecting the ethnic mix of the communities in which God has placed us. So, what are we to do?

Through the synod’s Missional River initiative, we have helped congregation become more outwardly focused by actively reaching out to people in their neighborhoods. We are to have different eyes, looking to where God has already been working around us and wondering how we can be a part of that work through relationships and service to those different from us. That has been a challenge, but has pro-

duced some good fruits.

We have, at the same time, encouraged those persons who come from a different ethnic and racial background to become leaders in the church. Locating those lay leaders, and those with gifts and the call to become a rostered leader, should be on the top of our list. In fact, that is one of the specific responsibilities of pastors and congregations, to “seek out and encourage qualified persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel.”

Finally, we have been actively addressing issues of discrimination and oppression. We need to be open to learning together so that we may understand, as well as speak out, against discrimination based on race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, and social status.

At its September meeting, the Synod Council approved a new Purpose Statement that I pray will help us in this endeavor: “God’s grace transforms and connects us to learn, to love, to lead.” The four main foci of that work is Pastoral Care for Leaders, Congregational Sustainability and Vitality, Justice and Peace, and Engagement with Neighbors. As we work on specific goals in each of these four areas, I pray that we may be better equipped as a whole synod to become an “inclusive church, which is outwardly focused with theological and culturally competent leaders.”

Bishop Ray Tiemann

Calendar of events

November 18	Healthy Congregations workshop, Shepherd King, San Antonio	March 30	Good Friday (Lutheran Ministry Center closed)
21	Gulf Coast Conference deanery, Safe Harbor	April 4	Lutheran World Relief Ingathering, Texas Lutheran University
23–24	Lutheran Ministry Center closed	7	Women of the ELCA Hill Country Conference event, Bethany, Fredericksburg
December 22	Lutheran Ministry Center closed	May 4	Synod Council meeting
25	Christmas Day (Lutheran Ministry Center closed)	4–6	Synod Assembly, Embassy Suites by Hilton San Marcos Hotel Conference Center & Spa
2018 January 1	New Year’s Day (Lutheran Ministry Center closed)	28	Memorial Day (Lutheran Ministry Center closed)
15	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Lutheran Ministry Center closed)	June 27–July 1	ELCA Youth Gathering, Houston
February 3	Equipping the Saints, St. Mark’s, Cuero	July 4	Independence Day (Lutheran Ministry Center closed)
9–11	Women of the ELCA Rio Grande Conference event, Trinity, Mission	September 3	Labor Day (Lutheran Ministry Center closed)
10	Senior Fest, Christ, Georgetown High School Youth Gathering, Lutheran Camp Chrysalis	7–8	Synod Council, Lutheran Ministry Center
16–17	Women of the ELCA Gulf Coast Conference event, Galilean, Corpus Christi	28–30	Southwestern Texas Synodical Women’s Organization convention, Pearl South Padre Island Resort
March 3	Synod Council, Lutheran Ministry Center	2019 Aug. 5–10	ELCA Churchwide Assembly, Milwaukee, Wis.
10	Women of the ELCA Capital North/Capital South Conference event, Gethsemane, Austin	2020 July 16–19	Women of the ELCA Triennial Gathering, Phoenix
17	Women of the ELCA Bluebonnet Conference event, St. Peter’s, Ander		
	Women of the ELCA Alamo/Cibolo Creek Conference event, Emanuel’s, Spirit of Joy, and Seguin Outdoor Learning Center		

LSPS sets two summer intensives

Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest will offer a first Spanish language, culture and theology intensive May 27–June 1. A second intensive will be held June 10–15, with the Rev. Ruben

Duran leading it on Models of Hispanic Ministry in the ELCA with Spanish language instruction. www.lsp.edu/programs/spanish-lang-hispanic-min-intensive

United in Christ, Diverse in People, Called by the Spirit—the Southwestern Texas Synod—Equipping the people of God to be instruments of God’s love.

—Mission Statement of the Southwestern Texas Synod



ISSN 1043-6855
USPS 541900

Published four times a year in Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter by the Southwestern Texas Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 1090 Oestreich Drive, Seguin, TX, 78155-3403. Periodicals Mail postage paid at Seguin, Texas and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Vista*, 1090 Oestreich Drive, Seguin, TX, 78155-3403.

Address Changes: Members of synod congregations should report address changes to their congregation.

Editor: Deacon John Edward Dellis, APR.

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News and advertising are to be directed to the editor at jdellis1961@gmail.com or 13430 Blackstone, Universal City, TX, 78148-3466, (830) 305-2758.

The Vista is not responsible for unsolicited materials.

Letters to the Editor: *The Vista* welcomes Letters to the Editor, which should include the author’s name and congregation. Letters should address a single topic and may be edited for length and clarity.

Online: www.swtsynod.org/thevista

CALL PROCESS

Calls Accepted

The Rev. Paula Canby—Shepherd of the Glen, Glenwood, Md.
The Rev. Candice Combs—Shepherd of the Hills, Austin (family pastor)
The Rev. Anne Kolmeier—St. Peter’s, Ander
The Rev. Eric Miletti-Gonzalez—Gethsemane/Jesus Maestro, San Antonio
The Rev. Paul Muehlbrad—St. Mark’s, Cuero
The Rev. Ron Windecker—Zion, Fredericksburg

Interviewing

Austin, St. Martin’s (associate pastor)
Austin, St. John/San Juan
Elgin, St. Peter

Calls in Process

Austin, Triumphant Love
Buda, Living Word (part-time)

Determining Needs

Bandera, Grace (part-time)
Burnet, First
Cameron, Abiding Savior (part-time)
Hutto, Hutto
San Antonio, Beitel
San Antonio, St. John (full-time)

(Note: **Interviewing** includes congregations and ministry settings that have submitted a Ministry Site Profile and have begun the interview process. **Calls in Process** lists congregations and ministry settings where a call committee has been formed to call a rostered leader. **Determining Needs** lists congregations and ministry settings that are beginning the call process for a rostered leader but have not submitted a Ministry Site Profile.)

NEWS FROM AROUND THE SYNOD

Immanuel, Comfort celebrated its 125th anniversary on Aug. 26, with Bishop Ray Tiemann as the presiding minister. An open house of the restored Kirche and parsonage were part of the day's celebration.

The stewardship committee of **Bethany, Fredericksburg** presented a "Be Prepared" workshop on Sept. 23.



Leaders at the **Cross Trails Ministry Day Camp**, held at July 10-14 at First, Gonzales, are wearing their Come and Take It shirts that were given by the congregation. Sarah Thieme, camp leader, summed up the week at day camp, "Traveling to Gonzales this week has been a great joy for Cross Trails Ministry day camp! The kids, volunteers, and help from different parts of the church show how supportive the community of First Evangelical Lutheran Church of Gonzales truly is. With so much support, the CTM Staff was able to teach the children about God while also getting a chance to learn about the rich history of this town."

Lord of Life, Austin held its 12th-annual Harvest Festival on Nov 11. The festival included craft vendors, food, bake sale, and children's activities. Proceeds benefit a local non-profit.



Lord of Life, Austin has experienced an enormous growth in the community surrounding the church. This summer's Vacation Bible School welcomed a wonderful and diverse group of children from the neighborhood. The kids enjoyed a multitude of activities with the "Maker Fun Factory" theme. Two weeks later, Lord of Life welcomed kids to share in

Lutherhill Ministries Day Camp with three camp leaders. In all, 82 children attended these programs, and only 10 were members or connected to members of Lord of Life.



St. Paul, Mason presented a series of chancel dramas entitled *Papa Luther*, which celebrate and tell the story of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. The short dramas are based on the book *Papa Luther*, written by Daniel Maurer and published by Augsburg Fortress.

Lutheran Men in Mission in the Southwestern Texas Synod invited men in the synod to attend the Nov. 11 Texas Lutheran University Bulldogs vs. the Southwestern University Pirates football game at the TLU stadium.

The Rev. Jay Alanis was a Bible study leader at the first ELCA Rostered Ministers Gathering, held Aug. 7-10 in Atlanta. Alanis is executive director of Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest.



At its September meeting in Austin, the **Texas Impact** board elected new officers for 2018-2019, with terms beginning in January. They are (left to right) President Rick Ertel, St. James, Harper, Southwestern Texas Synod; Texas Impact Executive Director Bee Moorhead; Past President Whit Bodman, South Central Conference, United Church of Christ; Secretary Patrice Schexnayder, Episcopal Diocese of Texas; and Vice President Jim McClain, Rio Texas United Methodist Annual Conference.

The Rev. Jessica Cain has been named as the synod's children, youth and family coordinator. youthfamily@swtsynod.org

parishes.

Photos and information about these celebrations received by *The Vista* will be shared in the Winter (next) issue.

Tiemann Endowment to enhance leadership development, honor retiring bishop and spouse

Each day, our family, friends, neighbors, and those we have yet to meet are impacting our communities in profound ways through the work of the church. For the past 18 years, Bishop Ray Tiemann has served our community of faith by equipping our lay leaders, pastors, and deacons as they build and strengthen our congregations and ministries.

The 2017 Synod Assembly of the Southwestern Texas Synod created the Tiemann Endowment Fund for Leadership Development. Managed by Lutheran Foundation of the Southwest as a permanent endowment fund, this endowment will support the leadership development of congregational lay leaders and pastors and deacons serving under call.

A planning team has been working since July to prepare materials to share with leaders and congregational members. Synod leadership—including members of the synod council, synod staff, the planning team, conference deans, and the heads of agencies and institutions related to the synod—are being invited to make gifts during the first phase of the process. Materials will soon be shared with all congregations and their members.

"We were honored to be asked to serve as co-conveners of the planning team for the Tiemann Endowment," said the Rev. Casey and the Rev. Lucinda Zesch. "There are two motivations behind this endeavor. First and foremost, we give thanks for and honor Bishop Ray and Debbie Tiemann for their years of service in our synod."

Holden Village reopens after mining remediation, fire evacuation

By David Austin

Last June, a group of 29 members and friends of First English, Austin embarked on a pilgrimage to Holden Village retreat center in the remote Cascade Mountains of the Wenatchee National Forest in Washington State. What a joy it was to have Austin-area friends, former members and friends now living in Houston and New York State, and a former First English family now living in Washington State also join us on this wonderful adventure. The summer program theme was Beginning Together through artistic, theological, scientific, and philosophical conversation with head, hands, and heart.

The village was closed to guests for the past four years for the \$500 million U.S. Forest Service Mine Remediation project to remove pollutants from the 1937-1957 mining era. Then, in the summer of 2015, the Wolverine Creek Fire forced an evacuation of Holden Village. Extensive areas of surrounding forest were burned.

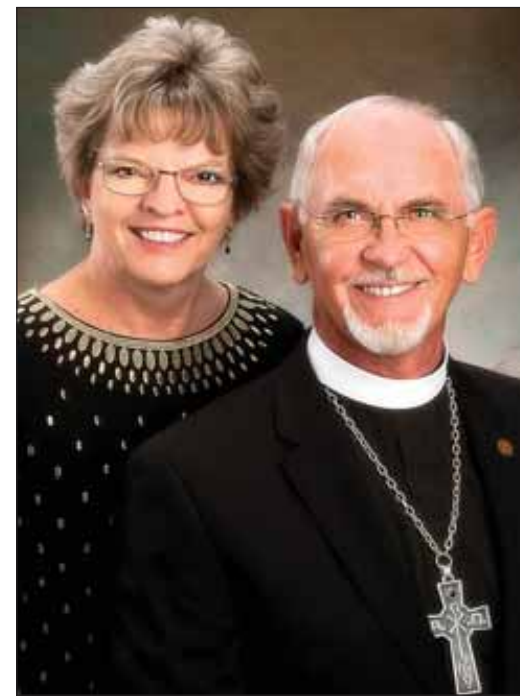


PHOTO BY WHITE OAK STUDIO

Debbie and Bishop Ray Tiemann

Secondly, we have the opportunity to create a new stream of funding through this permanent endowment to increase leadership development throughout our synod. We invite all members of synod congregations to join us in making an initial gift to the Tiemann Endowment, so that the first grants may be awarded to congregations in December 2018 by the new bishop."

Giving envelopes will be made available to congregational members soon. Online giving to the endowment fund is also being established on the synod web site and will be announced when it is available.

Thankfully the village was protected by Forest Service fire fighters as well as a newly installed village-wide fire suppression system. We were honored to be among the first groups of guests to return since 2013.

We were excited to see First English member Emily Atkinson, who has been working at Holden for the past year. She guided a small group on a day-long hike to Hart Lake, 700 feet above the village, and she opened her chalet for nightly domino games. The compassionate, always cheerful Holden Village community members reminded me of how grateful I am to have such a beloved and benevolent First English family.

The incredible Holden Summer Teaching Faculty and the caring and hospitable Holden Village residents, volunteers, worship leaders, and other guests made our journey together grace-filled and joyous. Snow-capped mountains, lakes and streams, crisp starry nights,

See *HOLDEN VILLAGE*, page 6

Reformation 500

Several congregations throughout the synod celebrated the 500th anniversary of the Reformation with special services, held jointly with other Lutheran congregations and with neighboring Roman Catholic

Wartburg develops collaborative learning degree program

By the Rev. Louise N. Johnson

Wartburg Theological Seminary's Master of Divinity-Collaborative Learning (MDiv-CL) is meeting the needs of many students and congregations. Students are receiving high-quality theological education that is both accessible and affordable. Congregations have the opportunity to participate in the formation

of new leaders and benefit from the leadership of a student for four consecutive years as they grow into the role of pastor.

The MDiv-CL combines part-time work in a congregation and full-time study in an MDiv program. Designed to be completed in four years, students receive support for their education and complete their studies and requirements for ordination, all

See WARTBURG, page 8



The Rev. Louise N. Johnson

Fellowship helps translate congregational leadership into public leadership

By the Rev. Carmen Raetzlof

Pastoral Leadership for Public Life is a nine-month fellowship funded through the Lily Foundation and offered through Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, through their Education Beyond the Walls department. The fellowship is a learning experience—a class, a cohort and experts with whom to work—in which pastors early in their ministry careers are given a

stipend to take time to learn how to translate congregational leadership into public leadership and how those realms overlap and interact.

From the Education Beyond the Walls website at Austin Seminary:

Fellowships in Pastoral Leadership for Public Life (PLPL) invite pastors to the intersection of the Good News and the Common Good, stretching their vision,

See PASTORAL LEADERSHIP, p. 8



PHOTO COURTESY AUSTIN PRESBYTERIAN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

2016 cohort of Pastoral Leadership for Public Life fellows

Lutheran Church in Costa Rica works for full participation of all

By the Rev. Judith Spindt

For more than 10 years, the Lutheran Church in Costa Rica (ILCO) has been developing a ministry to and with LGBT people. Their goal is twofold: open the church to the full participation of persons who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered in the life of the church, and advocacy in the public square for all aspects of sexual diversity. The coordinator of this pastoral ministry of diversity is Pastor Abel Moya. Inclusivity and respect are the values that guide this ministry.

The churches of Costa Rica are very conservative with regard to human sexuality and gender issues, which means ILCO is taking on a difficult task. After centuries of repression, homophobia and limited understandings of the role of human sexuality, ILCO is a pioneer, often a lone voice in the wider community speaking up for inclusivity, respect, and standing with those who are victims of current societal norms. There are a few

faith communities who stand with them from time to time, but ILCO is the only church that has officially accepted this role.

Pastor Moya says that ILCO is part of a process, not only in Costa Rica, but also across the globe as historically conservative churches are participating in Pride marches and other public advocacy. He recognizes that it is a profoundly difficult process that requires prayer, biblical and



theological reflection as well as asking for the forgiveness of the LGBT community

See ILCO, page 8

Congregational youth group learns, serves in Costa Rica

By the Rev. Fred Krebs

Members of St. Paul, Mason's youth group made their first trip to Costa Rica, to learn about the work of the Costa Rican Lutheran Church in their communities and also to carry out a work project in the community of Chilamate. Members that attended were Karol, Jodie and Alana Evans, Kenley Stockbridge, Coleman Swafford, Bricio Balderas, Kim Hengst and Pastor Fred Krebs. This mission trip offered the opportunity to discover and strengthen our faith through action and interaction, where we discovered the value of relationships with other people, especially with populations who are discriminated against and excluded from

society.

Our host in Costa Rica was Rodolpho Mena with the Iglesia Luterana Costarricense (ILCO), which is a partner church to the Southwestern Texas Synod. We started our visit by learning about the Lutheran Church in Costa Rica and the work they do. That day we also visited the Casa Abierta Day Care in the community of La Carpio. We were able to make a monetary donation to the day care that primarily services families with scarce economic resources. We were also able to play with the kids at the day care and have a devotion with them. We were truly blessed by our time at the day care playing and worshipping with these children. The

See YOUTH GROUP, page 8



Process for pre-identification of bishop candidates initiated

By Bishop Ray Tieman

The synod has established a process for pre-identification of bishop candidates for the bishop's election at our 2018 Synod Assembly on May 5-6 at the San Marcos Convention Center. The process is governed by continuing resolution S9.04.A17.

All eight of the synod's conferences are planning a meeting in February to initiate this process. At each conference meeting, there will be an ecclesiastical vote to identify Ministers of Word and Sacrament as potential nominees for bishop. All legal names from this first step will be reported to the Conference Assembly. Prior to the second step, any person not wishing to be further considered may remove her/his name. After voting, the second list shall be collected and forwarded to the synod's elections committee confidentially, uncounted and unreviewed. The chair of the elections committee for our 2018 Synod Assembly is the Rev. Stan Meyer.

The elections committee shall count all names from each conference assembly and

alphabetically list all those names. Then, they shall contact all such persons by email, requesting that if he/she chooses to be identified as a potential bishop's nominee, a biographical profile prepared by the nominations committee and a current picture shall be returned by a specified date. The biographical form shall include permission to conduct a background check as required by †S9.12.

Those biographical profiles and pictures of potential nominees will be available for Synod Assembly voting members on the synod's website at least 30 days prior to the Synod Assembly. They will remain on the website until one week before the assembly, when they will be taken down. This will assure that the bishop's election at the assembly will follow the process set out in S9.04. The names of potential nominees will not automatically appear on the ecclesiastical ballot.

Please keep this process in your prayers as our synod elects a new bishop.

The Rev. Ray Tiemann is bishop of the Southwestern Texas Synod.

Youth ministry is inclusive, cross-generational, faith-forming

By Deacon Staci Trosey

I remember when I was young and I first caught glimpse of the wider ministry of the church. This ministry, together with other ELCA congregations, has had a dynamic impact on my life, one that has helped to form my faith and calling to ministry.

I grew up in a small town in North Carolina that had only one ELCA congregation. We were a smaller congregation and most of our members were retired. I would often think to myself, "Why are there so few Lutherans my age?"

All of that changed when my pastor introduced us to synod youth events. In North Carolina, we would gather several times a year for retreats, LYO Convention,

and fellowship events. It was during this time that I began to feel like I was a part of something bigger and that even though my congregation was relatively small, we were called to a wider mission in ministry together. For me, this experience was nothing short of life changing.

Through my middle and high school years, I participated in many different synodical ministry opportunities. I made several life-long friends, many of whom are now colleagues in ministry. I got a chance to connect with other pastors, youth leaders, and adults who walked alongside me and helped to shape my faith. More than anything, I felt like I was a part of something bigger than just myself, something bigger than just my own

See CYF, page 6



Children, youth and family leaders wore purple shirts at the 2016 Synod Assembly, describing the mission of CFY ministries in the synod.

Synod Council establishes Latino Missional Leadership Group

By the Rev. Judith Spindt

As our Lutheran church grows in its outreach to Latinos, we are challenged to offer culturally appropriate experiences that will deepen discipleship and form strong leaders who will work to increase the outreach of our congregations. A lack of culturally appropriate, theologically sound resources in Spanish makes ministry and faith formation difficult.

For many years, as a pastor in Puerto Rico, my only teaching resources were my Bible, a hymnbook, Luther's Catechism, and myself. From these elements I had to develop activities, prepare leaders and provide print resources. Faithful lay leaders did the same to develop Sunday school and VBS materials to pass on the faith to our children. Things are not a lot different today for our Latino ministries. Thanks be to God for fine pastors who are willing to lead studies, offer first communion and confirmation classes and engage in theological conversations.

More recently an excellent resource has been available through the LEAD website. The Academia Ecu mica de Liderato is a video-based series of classes taught by Spanish speaking professors and scholars



on various themes of church history, theology and practice. Some of our Spanish speaking ministries have used this resource, but it requires internet access and has a per-participant cost that is more than many ministries can afford. It also assumes a level of education that is not always present in our congregations. Other than going to seminary to pursue a degree and a professional church vocation, resources are few and far between. Some synods with larger Spanish speaking populations and smaller distances have Spanish lay-schools. From time to time a leader prepares a resource and shares it with others.

In April, Spanish speaking leaders from four synods of Region 4 (Nebraska to Texas) gathered in the synod office to meet with the presidents of Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago and Wartburg Theological Seminary, as well as a

See LEADERSHIP GROUP, page 8

Clean, safe water brings positive changes to communities

By Louisa Ishida

In Luke 21, Jesus and his disciples observe a widow giving two small coins to the temple treasury. Jesus praises her for giving all that she has in order to help those who have even less. Inspired by the widow at the temple, Ed and Rennie Scharlau decided to use funds left to them by Rennie's stepmother to sponsor a well-building campaign through Water to Thrive, of which Ed is on the board of directors.

They want supporters to use their "small coin" donations to honor the widows in their lives as well as help build accessible wells for those who need them. All contributions to the "Widow's Mite" well-building campaign are being matched dollar to dollar by the funds left by Rennie's stepmother. The Scharlaus hope to raise \$5,000 for the well, although left-over matching dollars will continue to be used for future wells.

Ed and Rennie Scharlau are members of Triumphant Love, Austin, the same congregation from which Water to Thrive was born. Ed was a leader of a Bible study that, after learning about the African water crisis, ended up raising enough money to build 12 wells in Africa. One member of the Bible study, Dick Moeller, went on to found Water to Thrive, a faith-based non-profit that funds the building of accessible wells in villages across Ethiopia, Uganda, and Tanzania. Since its founding in 2008,



it has built over 750 wells, affecting more than 400,000 people. Wells are sponsored by groups, congregations, or individuals, with each campaign raising \$5,000 for a single water project. Triumphant Love has sponsored over 50 wells.

In the summer of 2016, Moeller took three former Triumphant Love pastors and Bishop Ray Tiemann to Ethiopia to see wells funded by Water to Thrive. Together, they visited some of the first wells that the congregation sponsored. They also saw newer ones from their "Celebrating Wells

See WATER TO THRIVE, page 7

DE PARTE DEL OBISPO



"Llamados a avanzar juntos en Cristo" es el tema de las nuevas orientaciones estratégicas de la IELA. En la edición de primavera de "The Vista", aprendimos cómo somos llamados a ser una iglesia próspera, difundir el Evangelio y profundizar la fe en todas las personas". La edición de verano fue enfocado en nuestro llamado de llegar a ser la iglesia que equipe a la gente en su vocación bautismal para la iglesia y el mundo. En esta edición de otoño, nos concentraremos en lo que significa una iglesia "inclusiva", que se enfoca externamente con líderes competentes en teología y cultura".

Sabemos que estadísticamente ha sido difícil para la IELA, vivir en nuestra visión de una iglesia, que es por lo menos el 10 por ciento de gente de color o de idioma diferente al inglés. Incluso después de casi 30 años, quedamos a sólo 9 por ciento, a pesar de numerosas iniciativas y enfoques para incrementar esas cifras.

Parte de lo que hemos aprendido en estos años y que últimamente se ha vuelto más visible en nuestra sociedad, es que el racismo estructural y sistémico ha sido parte de nuestra lucha. Nuestras congregaciones tienden a mirar más como fueron fundadas con familias de nuestros ancestros alemanes y europeos, en lugar de reflejar la mezcla étnica de las comunidades en las que Dios nos ha puesto. Así, ¿Qué vamos a hacer?

A través de la iniciativa del Sínodo Missional River, hemos ayudado a la congregación a que se enfoque más exteriormente para un alcance activo hacia las personas de sus vecindarios. Tenemos que tener ojos diferentes para mirar donde Dios ya ha estado trabajando alrededor de nosotros. Preguntarnos cómo podemos ser parte de ese trabajo por medio de las relaciones y el servicio a quienes son diferentes a nosotros. Ese ha sido un reto que ha pro-

ducido algunos buenos frutos.

Al mismo tiempo, tenemos que motivar a aquellas personas que tienen diferentes antecedentes étnicos y raciales para llegar a ser líderes en la iglesia. Localizar a esos líderes laicos, con dones y el llamado de llegar a ser líderes ordenados, debería estar en primer lugar de nuestra lista. De hecho, eso es una de las responsabilidades específicas del pastor y la congregación, buscar y motivar a personas calificadas para prepararse para el ministerio del Evangelio".

Finalmente, ya hemos abordado activamente asuntos de discriminación y opresión. Necesitamos estar dispuestos a aprender juntos para que podamos entender, así también cómo hablar en contra de la discriminación de raza, género, discapacidad, orientación sexual y condición social.

El Consejo del Sínodo, en su reunión de septiembre, aprobó una nueva Declaración de Propósito (Purpose Statement), oremos para que nos ayude en este esfuerzo: "Que la gracia de Dios nos transforme y conecte para aprender, amar y dirigir". Los cuatro enfoques principales de este trabajo son el cuidado pastoral para los líderes, la vitalidad y sostenibilidad congregacional, la justicia y la paz, y el compromiso con nuestro prójimo. Mientras trabajamos los objetivos específicos de cada una de estas cuatro áreas, oremos para que podamos estar mejor equipados como un Sínodo integro, que lleguemos a ser "una iglesia inclusiva que se enfoca externamente con líderes competentes en teología y cultura".

Ray Tiemann

El Obispo Ray Tiemann

CYF (continued from page 5)

congregation, and that together we could make a difference in the world.

My story heavily shapes my hopes for Children, Youth, and Family (CYF) Ministries here in our Synod. My hunch is that many of our young people find themselves in similar situations where their congregation may only have a handful of other youth. Synodical ministry activities can provide a wonderful place for our young people to connect with each other, grow in their faith, and serve in the name of Jesus.

Many may not know that each month, our congregational leaders in CYF Ministries meet. Some are volunteers; others are part and full-time staff members at their congregation. Some are rostered leaders; many are lay leaders.

Over the past several months we have been working through a process of defining why we gather and our hopes for CYF Ministries in our synod. We believe that this group exists "to renew, strengthen, and equip leaders of CYF ministries."

Together we share resources and ideas, provide a supportive community, worship together, advocate for one another and CYF ministries throughout our synod, and offer continuing education opportunities.

Our vision is that all congregations will become inclusive, cross-generational, faith-forming communities. By renewing, strengthening, and equipping CFY leaders in our congregations, we believe that we will be able to help connect more congregations and young people with each other, so that more and more will catch a glimpse of this wider ministry of our church.

Editor's note: After writing this article for The Vista, Deacon Stacey Troisi has moved to Boone, N.C., where her husband, the Rev. Steve Troisi, has accepted a call to a congregation there. The ministry and partnership with congregations and their youth leaders provided by Deacon Troisi is now continued under the leadership of the Rev. Jessica Cain. She can be reached at youthfamily@swtsynod.org.

Disaster response continues

Many congregations and their members are responding with gifts to assist persons whose homes and communities have been damaged by recent hurricanes and other disasters. There are several ways to give:

- To help with pastoral/congregational support so synod ministries (like Holy Cross, Rockport) can return to serving their neighborhoods, a gift to the Southwestern Texas Synod, marked "Hurricane Harvey," is welcomed.

- To help more long-term, consider gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response (www.elca.org, search <Lutheran Disaster Response>). They will be dealing with case management of the recovery, helping people get repairs, and resettled, etc.

- To help through a local agency, Upbring (www.upbring.org) provides local help with disasters in connection with Lutheran Disaster Response, VOAD, and other agencies.

Word and Service Ministry



Deacon Brianna Morris-Brock was consecrated on June 24 at Triumphant Love Lutheran Church in Austin. Morris-Brock serves as deacon for children, youth and families at Triumphant Love.



HOLDEN VILLAGE (continued from page 3)

forests, animals, flowers, woodland and river sounds and silence, masses of fireweed blooms spread beneath burned conifers, and even the burned areas themselves, were spirit-filled manifestations of the serenity and grandeur, but also fragility of God's creation. I left spiritually renewed and invigorated.

First English member Barbara Wiederaenders said, "There's no way to do justice to the 10 days I spent with loving members and friends. The whole experience was my understanding of what Sabbath is, holy rest. The people, nature's beauty, the absence of electronic distractions, the spiritual food provided by challenging presenters—all these were gifts for which I am deeply grateful."

Our trip coordinator, Teresa Ringness, told me, "Holden Village is an oasis of God's love and grace! I felt like I was sitting in God's lap for an entire week. The time in the village filled me with the beauty of God's creation, energy, kindness, joy, and a peace not easily found in the world today. The workshops, art opportunities, music and worship, filled me up! Simply an amazing adventure that I long to return to."

If you've never visited or long to return, visit www.holdenvillage.org for more information.

David Austin is a member of First English, Austin; past secretary of the Austin Conference; and current publicist and registrar for the Austin and Central Texas Senior Fest planning committee.

Word and Sacrament Ministry



The Rev. Paul and the Rev. Kelsie Theiss were ordained on July 15 by Bishop Ray Tiemann at Chapel of the Abiding Presence at Texas Lutheran University. They serve as pastors of Good Shepherd, Bastrop; Grace, Giddings; and Faith, McDade.

Water to Thrive (continued from page 5)

of Love” campaign, during which the congregation funded six wells. The pastors and Bishop Tiemann all had new wells dedicated in their honor. Along with visiting water projects, the group met with villagers to learn about Ethiopian culture and how the wells changed their lives.

While accessibility to clean, safe water has many positive effects on a community, one of the biggest impacts of a well is the freedom it gives to women. Women and girls can spend up to 10 hours a day walking for miles in order to get water that is often contaminated and unsafe for drinking. This leaves them with little time to go to school or spend time with their families.

However, a nearby well can turn their lives around, giving them the opportunity to attend school, get a job, and help their families thrive. This empowerment benefits the entire village, reminiscent to how the widow at the temple gave what little she had to support her community.

Ed and Rennie Scharlau recognize the importance of aiding and honoring the women who in turn bolster communities, both here and across the Atlantic. Using Rennie’s stepmother’s “mite” is their way of living by the words of Jesus Christ and they invite others to join them and Triumphant Love in supporting Water to Thrive by donating to the “Widow’s Mite” well at www.watertothrive.org/civcrn/pcp/info?reset=1&id=254.

God’s Work. Our Hands. (continued from page 1)



MacArthur Park Lutheran Church, San Antonio



First Lutheran Church, San Marcos

Harlingen provided a meal and hygiene products to the ministry’s clients. The congregation provides support to La Posada in a variety of ways throughout the year.

MacArthur Park, San Antonio provided routine car checks, collected trash in the neighborhood, wrote Christmas cards for wounded warriors, and worked at a community food bank.

Members of Zion, Arneckeville prepared brisket sandwiches, homemade cookies and packed sack lunches filled with a sandwich, chips, cookies, fruit, juice packs and water. They were distributed on Sunday evening in the parking lot of Christ’s Kitchen in Victoria, as the facility is closed and do not offer a hot meal on Sunday evenings.



Grace Lutheran Church, Harlingen



First Lutheran Church, Gonzales

FAITH LUTHERAN CHURCH IN LAVALLETTE, NEW JERSEY,

financed a major renovation with a loan from the Mission Investment Fund. When Superstorm Sandy severely damaged the new addition, MIF deferred Faith’s loan payments until the congregation got back on its feet.



YOU COULD INVEST IN AN ORDINARY IRA. OR YOU COULD INVEST IN AN IRA THAT LENDS A HELPING HAND.

The Mission Investment Fund offers a wide range of investments for individuals and congregations—investments that finance loans to ELCA congregations like Faith Lutheran Church. To learn more, contact us at mif.elca.org or 877.886.3522.



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YOUTH GROUP (continued from page 4)

language barrier was not hard to overcome, because friendship and God's love is a universal language we all understood that day.

Our next few days would be spent in Chilamate, in which the central theme of the experience was based on migration and the economic situation of the population of Sarapiquí, presented to us by Freddy Varela Sr., a representative of the Community Migrant Network of Sarapiquí. We also did our service work project in this community on a small church, which consisted of mixing concrete by hand on a concrete slab and pouring a concrete counter top, tiling the kitchen floor, setting a concrete kitchen sink, painting, digging drainage ditches and laying pipe, and the most important thing playing with the children in the neighborhood. It was hard to leave Chilamate when our work was done because we had made so many friends, especially the children.

Another important part of our trip was our visits to the indigenous communities of Guatusa and Puriscal. While in Guatusa we learned of the Maleku culture and how they have learned the art of making things out of natural products they have. We learned from the Maleku women, or should I say we attempted to learn, because what they

make look really easy, isn't. We also were also able to participate in a joint worship service and receive communion with them.

The second day of our visit was spent learning of their traditional worship and culture. We were able to learn to shoot the bow and arrows made from bamboo and tree branches. David Elizondo, the cultural representative, was surprised to see how well these country kids could shoot the bow and arrows. In Puriscal we were able to plant trees to commemorate the 500 years of reformation of the church, that would also be used later to make many cosmetic and medicinal products that are sold in the local stores.

There were a couple days of playing, relaxing, and enjoying the beauty of their country. Costa Rica is mainly mountains and rain forest and is very beautiful. The people are amazingly friendly and happy wherever you go. One of their favorite sayings is Pura Vida which means pure life, and I believe they truly live by that motto. Our trip was an amazing experience, and we would like to thank all who participated and contributed to our fundraisers to make this experience of a lifetime possible. Pura Vida!

The Rev. Fred Krebs is pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Mason.

LEADERSHIP GROUP (continued from page 5)

representative of the ELCA to talk about a new venture in providing faith formation resources for use in congregations of Spanish speakers as well as for persons who are culturally Hispanic but speak mostly English. Synod leaders felt the support of the seminary presidents and the ELCA for trying some new things.

A resolution was prepared for Synod Council, establishing a Latino Missional Leadership Group to be added to the Mission Team. This group of six to eight Hispanic leaders will begin meeting to gather resources, imagine what other things are needed, and begin to prepare materials for our Latino congregations.

The resolution also recognizes that this Latino Missional Leadership Group will be supported by the synod and the seminaries in its mission to deepen discipleship among Latino congregants of this church.

This is an important venture for our synod to undertake. The other synods of our region are in the process of following our lead and developing their own synod working groups, which will be linked through the work of the directors for evangelical mission.

The Rev. Judith Spindt is bishop's associate and director for evangelical mission for the Southwestern Texas Synod.

WARTBURG (continued from page 4)

without moving. The basic design of the program involves a student working part-time in a congregation and accessing a live classroom via Zoom (a video conferencing technology) for their studies. Students are connected not only to the Dubuque, Iowa campus, but also to other students across the country who are in similar kinds of settings.

Many students talk about the depth of community the technology facilitates, especially since all students meet in person on the Dubuque, IA campus at the start of every semester. The face-to-face beginning of each course contributes to the kind of strong education and formation for which Wartburg is known.

Wartburg Seminary has a track record of developing innovative programs designed to meet the needs of the church and deliver high quality theological education to those

whom God is calling to serve. We are thrilled to have welcomed so many congregations and synods as our partners in delivering theological education. And we are excited to walk with our students, who will finish the program with four consecutive years of congregational ministry experience.

We believe this is a strong model of education, as well as a practical one. With a growing shortage of pastoral leaders, Wartburg is thrilled to have 15 students in the program in only its second year. For more information about the MDiv-CL, please visit our website at www.wartburgseminary.edu or contact the admissions office at Admissions@wartburgseminary.edu. Wartburg Theological Seminary, located in Dubuque, Iowa, is one of seven seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

The Rev. Louise N. Johnson is president of Wartburg Theological Seminary.

PASTORAL LEADERSHIP (continued from page 4)

their capacities, and their confidence to change as leaders.

(<https://www.austinseminary.edu/page.cfm?p=2635>)

The 2016 cohort of PLPL fellows included three pastors from the Southwestern Texas Synod: Jake Fain of Peace Lutheran, New Braunfels; Steven Cox of Abiding Presence Lutheran, San Antonio, and Carmen Retzlaff of New Life Lutheran, Dripping Springs. In their cohort were Methodist, Episcopal, and Baptist leaders from around Central Texas. The group heard from pastors, local political leaders, state and local leaders of not-for-profit organizations, and community planners. They discussed the role of a pastor in the larger public sphere of the city, suburb, or small town that includes their ministry.

"For me," said Carmen Retzlaff, "this experience broadened my thinking about the role of a pastor out in the community: we identified the role of local convener—of being a person and place that could facilitate discussions; and we talked about the importance of connections with and support of those running local government. This shifted my thinking from 'being political,' to being part of the fabric of our local community. It helped me think about pastoral authority and the voice of the church—and to practice living into that role and voice."

Jake Fain also learned more about the church as a place and agent of community conversation. "Our society has lost much of its ability to engage with one another," he said, "especially those with differing viewpoints. The church and its leaders have an opportunity to create safe space to wrestle with the difficult issues we face in our world. We do not have to be the experts in the room; we don't have to solve everything and have all the answers. Rather, we bring the questions; facilitate healthy and robust conversation; and advocate for those who do not have a voice at the table."

Monthly three-day intensive learning events included participating in a community-wide planning process in the city of Waco, spending time at the Oblate Center in San Antonio, and exploring regional healthcare systems in Austin. At each event, the group also talked with a theologian, and also with local pastors. Between

each event, each pastor engaged in local actions in their community—broadening their contact base, and learning more about their place of ministry.

From the Education Beyond the Walls website at Austin Seminary:

PLPL Fellows are pastors who have mastered basic competencies of ministry and are poised to become exceptional pastoral leaders. We believe exceptional pastors engage relationally with public leaders, know about issues that impact their communities, and reflect theologically on current events and public issues. Exceptional pastors know how to connect the stories of our communities with God's story. PLPL Fellows are pastors committed to moving from competence to excellence. The Fellowship provides opportunity and support to make that possible.

(<https://www.austinseminary.edu/page.cfm?p=2635>)

The 2015 PLPL cohort included Pastor Paul Bailie of Iglesia Luterana San Lucas, Eagle Pass. This year, three more synod pastors have been selected and begun PLPL fellowships: Carolyn Albert Donovan of Peace Lutheran, Austin, Sharolyn Browning of Holy Cross Lutheran, Austin and Tim Bauerkemper of First Lutheran, San Marcos.

We pray for their work, and for each pastor in our synod as they respond to a pastor's Letter of Call:

"We call you to exercise among us the Ministry of Word and Sacrament which God has established and which the Holy Spirit empowers....To speak for justice on behalf of the poor and oppressed."

Jake Fain explained that this PLPL experience reminded him of that call and encouraged him.

"Living out your faith takes courage, plain and simple. It is a risky kind of faith that pushes one beyond the comfort zones of the familiar and compels one to engage the neighbor. I feel more confident, because I had the opportunity to walk with several other pastors and witness their courage and the Spirit shaping their ministries...We are a church centered on the gospel of Jesus who immersed himself in the world God loves."

The Rev. Carmen Raetzlof is pastor of New Life Lutheran Church in Dripping Springs.

ILCO (continued from page 4)

for the marginalization and persecution that it has experienced.

The Lutheran Church of Costa Rica is a forward looking church, not only in terms of inclusion of LGBT Christians, but also with regard to issues of sexuality in general. Diversity Ministry sees human sexuality as a gift of God, whose purpose is greater than the procreation of children. It touches on all aspects of an individual's life and their sense of themselves as part of a community. It invites us to reconsider our understanding of family and fullness of life.

Diversity ministry is always asking the question, "How will we accompany people in their lives, so that they know and are known by God in ways that promote the fullness of the kingdom of God?"

A number of participants in the Diversity Ministry are leaders in the church, as well as activists in the community.

The Rev. Judith Spindt is bishop's associate and director for evangelical mission for the Southwestern Texas Synod.