

# Praxis

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

**February 2008**

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## **Celebrating our Connections**

### **A Covenant for Companion Synods**

The Secretary of the Rwanda Lutheran Church, Pr John Rutsindtwarane, visited our synod in January. He reported that the Rwanda Church had agreed to the proposed Covenant for Companion Synods. The formal signing of the Covenant took place in the Office of the Bishop on January 30, with Bishop Mullen and Pr John both joyfully affixing their signatures to the document.



The companion synod model of accompaniment, of mutual love and service, extends across the Body of Christ and now is being embraced in a special way by the Lutheran Church of Rwanda and the Sierra Pacific Synod.

To view the Covenant in its entirety, please visit the Companion Synod web page at [www.spselca.org](http://www.spselca.org)

# Stewardship

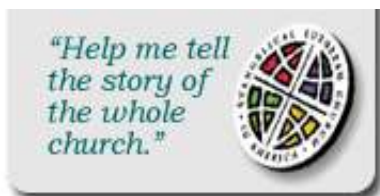
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## Pr Bud Egdahl

Read Bits from Bud in the weekly Byte of Synod. Not a subscriber? Send a note to [info@spselca.org](mailto:info@spselca.org)

Email Pr Egdahl:  
[padreegdahl@aol.com](mailto:padreegdahl@aol.com)



## [Stories of the church to Share](#)

## A FEW FACTS AND ONE IDEA

It's a "given" that we want to reach out with the Gospel and bring others into the family of Christ. It's called "The Great Commission" by all Christians.

Now there are many ways to carry out this mission for Christ. Personal witness to family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc. The witness a group makes in caring for the needs of others. The list goes on and on. Everything we do and are, individually and collectively, is a telling witness, often louder than words.

One of the ways we all are partnering to carry out this mandate is by the planting of new congregations and ministries.

Our Witness and Service discipling team has aimed our synod resources strongly in that direction. Currently, the Sierra Pacific Synod (that is your congregation and the others) is in the process of establishing about 10% of all the new starts in the whole ELCA across the country. That number is actually more new starts in our synod than in all the years since 1988, the start of our Synod and the ELCA. That's a fact.

Fact number two: It takes a bundle of bucks to get a new ministry off the ground. We (all of us, together, as the Synod) provide those funds through our Mission Support dollars.

Fact number three: Since 1988, congregational income has risen, but mission support from congregations as a percentage of income has dropped from over 7 % in '88 to about 4% in '07. Meanwhile, congregational savings and endowment accounts have shot up dramatically.

So here is the idea: each congregation give a tithe of the income that those savings and endowment funds produce each year. What do you say? Let's do it!

Major forward steps in our witness and service will result.

## Lent as a Retreat?

Recently I heard that in the early church Lent was a time for corporate retreat, a time to diagnose: how are we doing as church in matters of the Spirit and the apostolic faith and mission. Four great stories--Nicodemus coming to Jesus in the night, the Samaritan woman at the well, the man born blind, and the raising of Lazarus--were used by the early church for those retreats. The placement of those texts in our lectionary for Lent A therefore comes from the wisdom and practice of the early church as it engaged in corporate self-examination, and used those particular stories again and again in seeking renewal and faithfulness to God.

Taking a hint from the early church, what if Lent this year were to be seen as just such a time of corporate reflection on the quality of our life together using those stories? This would mean pastors and congregants together reflecting on the stories not so much in terms of personal piety, but rather as a way of examining, in deep and honest ways, the quality of life and mission in the *koinonia*—the body of Christ as a spiritual community whose purpose is to change the world in faithfulness to God.

Here are some questions to get us started:

Nicodemus (John 3): how have we (for example, your congregation) become like Nicodemus, not comprehending a need to be “born again” in our life together? Where do we resist the winds of the Spirit blowing among us? How clear are we about God’s purpose in sending Jesus as the sign of love for cosmos?

Samaritan Woman at the Well (John 4): Are worship styles or worship wars getting in the way of actual worship? Are we confusing the

“mountain” of our worship with the worship of God? How good are we at offering living water to the spiritually thirsty? Are we too narrowly defined in our understanding of being Lutheran Christians?



### Man Born Blind

(John 9): In what ways, as church, are we blind? Are we in fact willing and eager to have Christ do great things among us? What practices or attitudes do we have that stifle the voices of those caught up in the experience of the mystery of God? Where is our tradition and piety getting in the way of the world’s healing?

Lazarus (John 11): Is there a “bad smell” among us? Where are the tombs? Can we hear the voice of Jesus calling us to come forth? At what points in our life together are we in need of being “unbound” for the sake of mission to the world?

Ask those questions, and others like them, and Lent will lead to renewal, clarity of purpose and joy, as Psalm 1 so poetically encourages in terms of a corporate “examen”:

*Happy are they who have not walked in the counsel of the wicked, Or lingered in the way of sinners, Or sat in the company of the scornful!*

*Their delight is in the way of God, and they meditate on God’s way day and night.*

+ David G. Mullen

# Discipling Team

## Leadership Discipling Team

*Chair*  
Pr Nancy Nelson

*District A*

*District B*  
Pr Mary Lou Petitjean

*District C*  
Dr Margaret McLean

*District D*  
Mr Jim White

*District E*  
Mr Nick Droge

*At Large*  
Pr Mark Holmerud

*At Large*  
Pr Anne Carlson

Dean

## Leadership Discipling Team

The Assembly in April will have the election of a bishop as a primary focus.

To encourage thoughtful participation, Bishop Mullen called for a team to design ways in which the entire synod would be invited to participate in the preparation of a Synod Profile. Something like a congregational profile developed when a congregation is seeking a pastor, the Team designed *“The Leader We Seek.”*

Rostered leaders and members of congregations were invited to share their thoughts and hopes for the future. Along with meetings, an online survey was designed as yet another way more could participate. In addition, a synod audit, a more limited process than the Profile, was conducted by a Churchwide team. The entire report will be available soon. All of this intended to assist the synod as we look toward our future shared ministry.

Synod conferences have met and most have submitted names (limit of 5) of pastors on the ELCA roster to be considered for bishop. The Nominating Committee will be contacting those persons to ascertain if they wish their name to go forward. Those who agree will provide written materials to be included in the pre-Assembly packet for Voting Members. The first ballot will be an ecclesiastical ballot, which allows for additional names to be considered. Above, beyond and through all of these processes are the many prayers which are being offered for the guidance of God’s Spirit.

Whether it is in the matter of calling a pastor to serve a congregation or a bishop to serve a synod, the most important step is to trust God’s guiding and leading—discerned through prayer and the gift of God’s Spirit.

In the meantime, The Leadership Discipling Team is continuing its work in assisting rostered leaders in the development of “local communities of nurture and support” – collegial, confidential affinity groups that meet to offer support and prayer for participants. One group has been formed, with the Team’s financial assistance. If you are interested in finding out how the Discipling Team can offer specific support for such a group in your area, please contact our chair, Pr. Nancy Nelson, at [fennel94019@yahoo.com](mailto:fennel94019@yahoo.com).

If there are other ways that our team can be of assistance, we’d like to hear from you!



# Congregations

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## “Leading the Song of God’s People”

Holy Cross in Livermore served as the host congregation for the January gathering in led by Marty Haugen, Mary Preus, and Tom Witt.

Presentations and small hands-on workshops focused on why we sing, what we sing and how we sing.

Thursday evening through Saturday afternoon was rich in singing, particularly exploring new and unfamiliar hymns in the *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* hymnal and weaving a variety of seasonal prayer responses and gospel responses into the liturgies. Marty, Mary and Tom modeled how to lead congregational song with animation and enthusiasm, with instruments and voice, using call and response.

Many of our songs were from other cultures. Even with the challenge of other languages, we caught the flavor of the song and the true meaning of the “reign of God” in a global way. Thursday evening our worship time centered around a large world map on the floor as participants came forward to place lighted tea-lights on the map as countries of the world were chanted by our leaders.

Friday we were in three groups with a volunteer leading their group in song. Practical critiques, tips, and encouragement came from our leaders. The evening concert by the team members was packed! Workshop participants were joined by members of the community, all of whom took part in exhilarating community singing – a truly participatory concert and another example of what we might do at home.

An emphasis of the workshop was that the primary voice of the church is the **congregation** - not the choir, organ, praise

band, or soloists. We were challenged to return to our homes with one or two practical ideas and techniques of how we might enhance congregational singing, making it more relevant and vibrant, proclaiming the Word through song, equipping the people of God for their journey. Awesome!

Audry Hanson

## Sacramento ACT

St. John's Lutheran Church, in partnership with the Lutheran Office of Public Policy, sponsored a table at the Sacramento ACT (Area Congregations Together; [www.sacact.org](http://www.sacact.org)) January dinner featuring Geoffrey Canada, President and CEO of Harlem Children's Zone, and author of *Fist Stick Knife Gun: A Personal History of Violence in America*. He was in Sacramento as part of ACT's Stand Together Campaign, which features a series of strategies to increase the health and success of young people. Attendees: Mark Carlson, Cheryl Young, Ron Dwyer-Voss, Jane Okubo, Tom Sebo, Shirley Capp, Liese Martinez, and Allison Swan, the community organizer from ACT who works with St. John's. Sacramento ACT is part of PICO California ([www.picalifornia.org](http://www.picalifornia.org)), which includes ELCA congregations in its Bay Area and Fresno affiliates. For information on how the ELCA is involved in faith-based community organizing, please see [www.elca.org/organizing](http://www.elca.org/organizing).



## Order Eco-Palms by February 20

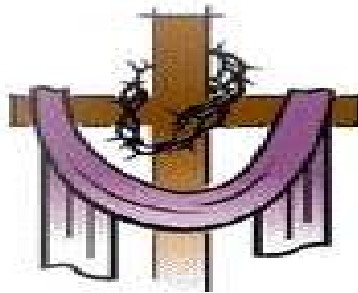
In Guatemala and Mexico, a [new palm-harvesting process](#) protects the environment and also provides a fair income for the harvesters. Called eco-palms, the palms are

harvested in a sustainable way, the harvesters are paid on the quality of the palms and package and ship their palms directly rather than relying on middlemen -- ensuring that more of the money paid for the palms actually goes to those who worked the hardest to provide them. Go to <http://www.lwr.org/palms>

## The Amazing Gift of Your Baptism

Nine ecumenical study sessions on Baptism (God's amazing grace, the individual before God, initiation into the Church, encounter with love, healing, community life, new life, social response, death). Each session has Scripture, a reflection and discussion "talking points."

[Http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/resources/baptism.pdf](http://www.elca.org/ecumenical/resources/baptism.pdf)



## Resources for Simple Living

Lifestyle choices for healthier people and a healthier planet - good any time as well as Lent

<http://www.elca.org/communication/simple.html>

## Seminary Courses for Laity

Several different studies, each providing a notebook containing economical and reproducible "Study Guides" for five sessions, a "Teacher's Guide," related articles and other resources. Cost:\$34.95 for each study set of materials (\$24.95 if you download).

<Http://www.ltsp.edu/layed/studyguides.html>

## We Pray

for family, friends and colleagues at the death of Todd Van Laningham Sunday, January 27

for healing :

retired Pr Marty Schaefer, hospitalized with unknown infection

Pr Gregg Brown ( Miracles of Faith Church) recovering from surgery

Pr Ruben Escobar,(El Buen Pastor, Salinas) recovering from abdominal surgery

Pr Duane Woida, (Salem Home)recovering from prostate surgery

Prayer requests may be sent to [info@spselca.org](mailto:info@spselca.org)  
(Please be sure to secure permission first)

## Roster Changes

**Cindy Beck**, Interim Ministry

**Ruth Hanusa**, to Chaplaincy, St Mary's Regional Medical Center, Reno

**Paul Werfelmann**, on leave from call

**Karen Woida**, to Calvary, Millbrae

**Guta Yadeta**, pastor developer, Oromo Christ Evangelical Church, San Lorenzo

## Congregations in Transition

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

Congregation	Interim Pastor
Auberry, Sierra (2)	Carl Bengston
Citrus Heights, Advent (Associate)(4)	
Concord, Good Shepherd (2)	
Elko, Faith (3)	Beverly Jensen
Fairfax, Christ (2)	Terry Hamilton-Poore
Fresno, Hope	
Fresno, Immanuel(Associate) (3)	
Grass Valley, Peace (3) (Associate)	
Kerman, Bethany (3)	
Lodi, Emanuel (2)	
Marysville, Faith (2)	Kirk Shipley
Merced, Shepherd of the Valley (2)	Nick Droge
Palo Alto, First (3)	David Rohrer
Quincy, Our Savior (3)	Ruth Hanusa
Redding, St James (1)	
Reno, Holy Cross (2)	Larry Quanbeck
Mi-Wuk Village, Mt Calvary (1)	
Rio Linda, Calvary(3)	Bruce Johnson
Sacramento, Gloria Dei	
Sacramento, Good Shepherd (2)	
Sacramento, Our Redeemer (1)	Scott Minke
San Leandro, Epiphany (1)	
San Leandro, St James (2)	Ruth Leshar
Saratoga, Immanuel (2)	William Norman
Woodland (Associate)(2)	

# Synod Calendar

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## February

6 Ash Wednesday  
9 Word & Sacrament Disciplining Team  
17-19 Clergy/AiMs/Spouses Retreat  
18 Assembly Planning Team  
26-28 Region II Bishops & Staff Retreat

## April

1-3 First Call Theological Education  
11-13 Candidacy Committee  
24 Synod Council  
25-27 Synod Assembly  
28 Office Closed

## March

3-4 Clergy/Spouse Retreat  
6-11 Conference of Bishops  
17 Chrism Mass  
21 Good Friday—office closed  
23 Resurrection of Our Lord

## May

1 Ascension of Our Lord  
17 Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary  
Commencement  
11 The Day of Pentecost  
18 The Holy Trinity  
26 Memorial Day (office closed)

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[www.spselca.org](http://www.spselca.org)

by the Sierra Pacific Synod of the ELCA

Rev F Noreen Meginness, Editor

Rev David G Mullen, Bishop

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