

Praxis

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

August 2007

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News from Rwanda

Pr John Rutsindintwarane



Upper left: Discussion leader; at right: stacking stones for foundation
Below: Showing the District Mayor the foundation lines.

A Community Clinic

I started training the community how to turn Research into Action (see the pictures). They identified the highest need: a clinic (hospital). I facilitate Leadership training every Tuesday. Both men and women from all background and faith groups, come together to learn how to apply available assets that would PUSH them to build the hospital. It is an incredible transformation not only for the people themselves but also to me. I feel humbled and want to express my deep appreciation to all who helped to turn my dream into reality. The work is exhausting but rewarding when you see ordinary people holding each other accountable. Please, accept my THANK YOU NOTE.

(Pr John serves as the Secretary of the Rwanda Lutheran Church and leads community organizing efforts throughout the country)



Pr Bud Egdahl

Read Bits from Bud in the weekly Byte of Synod. Not a subscriber? Send a note to info@spselca.org

MEANINGFUL MOTIVATION IS ESSENTIAL

Pr Lauren Egdahl, Stewardship Specialist

This might be an important time to review what we are using for meaningful motivation for our folks to grow in their stewardship of God's gifts.

In mid-July I took my two youngest grandchildren (12 and 10) to the weekly turtle races in the nearby small town. The place was packed with parents and children. It's a big event each week.

The method is this: each child can get a number (ours were 213 and 214). Then you wait. Ten players per race (we had quite a wait). When your number is up for the next race, each child selects the turtle she/he thinks looks like an energetic winner. Put the turtle (average about 8" in diameter) in a 5 gallon plastic ice cream bucket.

You start in a small circle, in the center of a large circular area. At the whistle, the turtle is released to crawl toward the outside of the circle, and be first to cross a line.

Here's the motivation provided: the plastic buckets are pounded up and down in the center circle, assuming that the noise will motivate your turtle to be first across the finish line.

We can make a lot of noise about financial stewardship. But not the most effective, meaningful motivation for God's people. We can coerce, scare, lay guilt trips, etc., as motivation. And we sometimes do. We may get some money, but that is not really effective, long run.

Most meaningful has been, is and will be a consistent teaching of the Biblical promises of God's rich blessings and abundance to each of us.

A constant focus on the gracious gift of Jesus Christ, as our Savior and Lord; a continuing reminder that Jesus talked about money more than anything else except the Kingdom, (four times more than Jesus talked about prayer), these are the powerful motivators for devoted Christian living.

So, "Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith."

“I’ll get you out of any trouble. I’ll give you the best of care if you’ll only get to know and trust me. Call me and I’ll answer, be at your side in bad times; I’ll rescue you, then throw you a party. I’ll give you a long life, give you a long drink of salvation!”¹

Disaster Preparedness

Disaster hits, usually without much warning. The firestorm at South Lake Tahoe, the recent earthquake in Oakland, and lingering and painful memories of Katrina, bring to the forefront our need for disaster preparedness.

It will be wise for congregational and synodical leadership to once again review the status of our disaster preparedness. Each congregation and congregational family needs to have a plan in place for dealing with a major disaster. Disasters, after all, are confusing enough, but chaos happens when we do not have some plans in place. Water, food, escape routes, contact information, locations to meet family members, communications, health and medical information, all of these should be included in planning.



Yet, no matter how thorough our plans are, when disaster strikes, people suffer, as did and are the people of South Lake Tahoe. God be praised for the professionals—the firefighters, law enforcement, medical personnel, and civic leaders who immediately rallied with the kind of valiant help needed. God be praised also for the humanitarian help offered from around our synod. Pastor Joel Martyn and the members Hope Lutheran and citizens of South Lake Tahoe are deeply appreciative of the large and caring response to their crisis. I visited there on Sunday July 8 and worshiped with the people of Hope and offered words of encouragement and support. Pastor Martyn and his wife Amanda drove my wife Sue and me on a brief tour through the fire area: such terrible devastation.

When there is loss of homes, possessions and the accustomed comforts of ordinary daily life, eventually dawns the realization that recovery doesn’t happen in a day, a week, or a month. Recovery is long-term. We can be proud that LSS and Lutheran Disaster Response are present in places like South Lake Tahoe, with the knowledge and expertise to deal with such events for the long term.

And while certainly at the top of the list of any preparedness response are the immediate needs for daily sustenance and shelter, you don’t have to go very far down the list to discern the need for the emotional and spiritual care of devastated people.

Our disaster preparedness therefore must include faithful communion with God. Faith does not keep us from disasters like earthquakes, fires, and terrible storms. But our faith will keep us from spiritual disaster, which may well be the worst kind of all. Daily communion with the Holy Trinity via prayer, immersing ourselves in the Living Word in a community of faith via worship and *koinonia* will keep us safe in deep ways. From such faithfulness we also offer our wisest, most caring *diakonia*—service unto others given less out of our need, and more out of theirs, putting flesh on the everlasting promise of God: *Call me and I’ll answer, I’ll be at your side in bad times...*

David G Mullen, Bishop

¹ Psalm 91:14-16, *The Message*. Eugene Peterson

Discipling Team

Leadership Discipling Team

Chair
Pr Nancy Nelson

District A
Ms Rowena Henry, DM

District B
Pr Mary Lou Petitjean

District C
Dr Margaret McLean

District D
Vacant

District E
Mr Nick Droge

At Large
Pr Mark Holmerud

Pr. Bob Andersen
Dean

The Sierra Pacific Health Project *Bringing Health to Life*

In her book, *The Right Road: Life Choices for Clergy*, Gwen Wagstrom Halaas, (M.D.) shares the following thought with pastors: “Healthy leaders enhance lives -- your own life, the lives of your family members, the lives of your congregation members, and the lives of those in your community.” Dr. Halaas suggests that pastors who lead healthy lives promote healthy lifestyles within congregations, and that these are signs of a “vital and meaningful church in the world.”

The Sierra Pacific Health Project is a new effort within the Synod that builds on the ideas expressed by Dr. Halaas. At a time when some have suggested that health care costs may indeed affect the long-term life and mission of the church, this project is designed to address that challenge. The purpose of the Sierra Pacific Health Project is generally twofold:

- To provide encouragement and support to pastors in making healthy lifestyle choices that will potentially increase their levels of health and fitness.
- To invite and equip pastors to become leaders in developing a "culture of health" in congregations across the Synod.

This project, endorsed by the Leadership Discipling Team, affirms the position of the ELCA Board of Pensions which states that clergy who live a balanced life and care for their health are better able to pass on their faith and model healthy behaviors for others. It is hoped that as a result of this project, not only will pastors lead more healthy lives and lower their personal health risk factors, but that their congregations will become communities that support and encourage healthy lifestyle choices for all members. The project will focus on three primary health issues: physical activity, nutrition, and stress management.

The project will be coordinated by Don Romsa, Lutheran Campus Pastor in Fresno. Don’s background in health and wellness includes graduate work and several programs and projects at the colleges and universities in Fresno. The project is scheduled to begin in September with information meetings among pastors at the Conference level. The primary funding for this project comes through a generous grant from the Larry Hillblom Foundation.

The Leadership Discipling Team is excited about the potential of this project among the pastors and congregations of the Synod. It is hoped that the Sierra Pacific Health Project will indeed serve to “bring health to life”.



Angora Fire in Sierra Nevada



On June 24th I woke from my Sunday afternoon nap to the booming sound of a hovering helicopter. I went outside and saw “it”, the massive plume of smoke, a fire in the Tahoe Basin.

The Helicopter picked up water from the pond behind my home and left. It was back within ten seconds. Ten seconds was all it took that helicopter to leave, dump the water and return. I knew the fire was close. I woke up my wife and two boys. We grabbed a few things, packed up the truck and headed to the church. The hill was glowing orange and smoke filled the air. I grabbed hard-drives and old church records, and got my family to safety.

Neither our home or church was destroyed in the Angora Fire, though the church was on the fire line. Many families in our congregation lost their homes. 254 homes burned to the ground. Over fifty percent were homes of South Lake Tahoe locals, the bulk of the local work force. Another 40 percent were rental places, and the remaining 10 percent were vacation homes. No lives were lost, but the Angora Fire was a disaster for the South Lake Tahoe community.

My efforts as pastor, has been to help people see hope in the midst of tragedy. Where is God in this situation? What is God doing in this community? How is the Holy Spirit working among us? How do we, the people of God, minister to those who have lost everything, or to those who didn't lose

anything but were evacuated from their homes four times, and cringe when they hear a siren or a helicopter?

There is a lot of work to be done up here in the Sierra Nevadas. Many ask how they can help. First and foremost is prayer. Pray for the residents who have lost their homes, and pray for all those affected by the fire. My second response: send money. It's the best way to make sure that people get what they need. Sorting through tons of clothing, cookware, and old furniture does not help right now. Those will be needed, but for now financial help is the best way to minister to the fire survivors. The church has set up the “Love Thy Neighbor Fund”. This fund is for those in immediate need. Send a check to Hope Lutheran Church, with “Love thy Neighbor” in the memo line. Monies received will be used only for fire relief.

Thank you for all your prayers, and for loving the people here.

I also want to thank Bishop Mullen for coming to Tahoe to pull me up out of the ashes. That loving and caring support really helped get me and my wife through a tough time.

God's blessings be upon you all!
Pastor Joel Martyn

**Hope Lutheran Church of the Sierras
930 Julie Lane, South Lake Tahoe CA.
96150**

(Lutheran Social Service is also giving support to the South Lake Tahoe recovery effort. Check out the [LSS web site](#) for more information.

Congregations

Global Hallelujahs – Local Celebration

Kathleen S. Hurty, Ph.D.
Member of Resurrection Lutheran Church

It was a typical church basement event, Resurrection Lutheran Church in Oakland, was honoring its High School Graduates: Dawit Asfaha, Jeremiah Chacha, Tarchie Herron, Dante Millet, Elizabeth Misana, and Monika Yamuremye.

What makes the moment atypical is the story: Five different birth countries are represented among these six students – Tanzania, Burundi, Ethiopia, Nigeria and the U.S. All six with African roots. Some had escaped from genocide and civil war! All are going to College this fall. Gifts from the congregation were presented by Pastor Lucy Kolin – including Thrivent scholarships. Each also received a graduation sash from the children of the congregation.

The congregation has sister congregations in Tanzania and Rwanda. After school music programs, led by former organist Harriet Pennekamp, draw a number of African American, Asian American, Hispanic/Latino American and Caucasian children. The violin group and the children's choir participated at the festive worship earlier on Sunday morning.

The congregation has begun a focused ministry with the African immigrant community. Drumming classes, and classes in Swahili are offered at the church. It is an atypical ministry perhaps, but with typical Lutheran commitment to education, vocation, and music.



The graduates, nurtured by their church family and pastor, are planning lives of commitment and service. What a day of hallelujahs in a global-local setting!

Photo: Ray Waespi

Trinity in Madera Dedicates a New Building

Pr Gary Gould and members stand before the newly built facility which houses the food program for the Madera Coalition for Justice. The self-help group works with and for the working poor. Some 400-500 boxes of food are given out each week.



Around the Synod

We Pray

for retired pastor, **Bonnie Bell**, following heart surgery;
for **Pr Ruth Hanusa** and family at the death of her
mother in July; in thanksgiving for the birth of **Marissa
Karolyn** to Michelle and Pr Mike O'Berg.



*L-R: Pr Barb Martens, Pr Stephanie Lord and Bishop
Allan Bjornberg, Rocky Mountain Synod*

Stephanie Lord was ordained July 8 at Black
Forest Lutheran Church in Colorado Springs. She
has been called to serve as Associate Pastor at
Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Santa Rosa.

Roster Changes

Laurie Andersen, to Immanuel, Los Altos
Mark Bangson, to NW Washington Synod
Al Cassel, to Grand Canyon Synod
Sandra Dager, to Grace, Richmond
Allen Dunn, to Ascension, Citrus Heights
Richard Foster, to retirement
Robyn Hartwig, to on leave from call
Stephanie Lord, to Bethlehem, Santa Rosa
Michael Rogers, to retirement

Congregations in Transition

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

Congregation	Interim Pastor
Auberry, Sierra (1)	
Auburn, Bethlehem (4)	Dan Hodgson
Citrus Heights, Advent (Associate)(2)	
Elko, Faith (2)	Beverly Jensen
Fairfax, Christ (1)	Terry Hamilton-Poore
Fort Bragg, Trinity (2)	Chris Warner-Carey
Fresno, Immanuel(Associate) (3)	
Granite Bay, Resurrection(1)	John Ridenour
Kerman, Bethany (1)	
Lodi, Emanuel (1)	
Mariposa, Mariposa(3)	Kirk Shipley
Merced, Shepherd of the Valley (2)	Carl Bengston
Modesto, Emanuel(2)	Roger Lee
Oakland, Bethlehem (2)	Larry Quanbeck
Palo Alto, First (2)	David Rohrer
Petaluma, Elim (Outreach& Discipleship)(3)	
Quincy, Our Savior (2)	
Redding, St James (1)	
Rio Linda, Calvary(3)	Bruce Johnson
Sacramento, Good Shepherd (Sr)	Russ Creydt
San Leandro, St James (2)	Ruth Leshner
Santa Clara, Our Savior (3)	Andreas Piehlhoop
Santa Rosa, Bethlehem(Assoc-Youth & Family)(4)	
Stockton, Zion (3)	Stan Niemi

Dr Howard Wennes has been named Interim



President at California
Lutheran University. The
Board of Regents will
begin the search for a
president to succeed John
Sladek, who returned to
Colorado. For more, go to
www.clunet.edu

Synod Calendar

August

- 4 Racial/Ethnic gathering, Oakland
- 6-11 Churchwide Assembly
- 19 Racial/Ethnic gathering, Sacramento
- 21 Assembly Planning
- 24-25 Candidacy Committee
- 25 Racial/Ethnic gathering, Livingston
- 28 Executive Committee

September

- 3 Labor Day holiday
- 4 Discipling Team Chairs/Bishop' s staff
- 5 Leadership Discipling Team
- 8 Word & Sacrament Discipling Team
- 11-12 Region II Consultation
- 15 Synod Assessment Day
- 18-19 Synod Youth Planning
- 18-21 Interim Pastors Training
- 22 Racial/Ethnic gathering, San Jose
- 28-29 Synod Council

A new synodical **Working Group on Racial Ministries** will come into existence this fall. The purpose of the working group will be to assist the synod in addressing three primary areas:

1. inclusion and participation by people of color in decision making and coordination of strategies for racial/ethnic ministry;
2. multi-cultural diversity and cultural competence skill-building within congregations, agencies, and synodical structures of the Sierra Pacific Synod;
3. anti-racism ministry, focusing especially on issues of systemic change to help the church and its membership overcome institutional barriers to effective ministry.

[See below for locations and dates of Gatherings to discuss the creation of this new working group.](#)

Working Group on Racial Ethnic Ministries

Four Gatherings are being held to discuss the creation of this new working group. Dates and locations include:

- United Lutheran, Oakland** - Wednesday, August 4 10AM-12Noon
- First English, Sacramento** - Thursday, August 19 5-7PM
- Our Redeemer, Livingston** - Wednesday, August 25 10AM-12Noon
- Pueblo de Dios, San Jose** - Saturday, September 22 10AM-12Noon

Pastors and laity are strongly encouraged to attend the Gathering nearest them to show their support for this vital initiative.

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www.spselca.org

by the Sierra Pacific Synod of the ELCA.

Rev F Noreen Meginness, Editor

Rev David G Mullen, Bishop
