

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace to you!

First, I want to thank you for your prayers for the Montana Synod, and for your prayers for my ministry. The Service of Installation was a celebration of the unity and diversity of the church. Presiding Bishop Hanson preached a powerful sermon which many of you have requested. We are trying to make that available. Thank you for your presence and for your prayers. The Installation offering raised over \$1700 for NRIT, and over \$1500 for the Lutheran World Federation. In addition, the rostered women made a special gift of over \$650 to the Pastora Jessica Crist Retreat Center in Bolivia. Thank you all.

Second, I want to give you an update on the Synod Council, which met this past weekend. We are in transition, and some of the business we conducted reflected that. Complete Council minutes will be available on the Synod website within the month. But here are some of the things that the Synod Council did:

**Personnel:**

1. Issued a call to the Rev. David W. Peters to be Associate to the Bishop, beginning part time in October and full time in November.
2. Affirmed support staff restructuring:
  - Susan Hedahl as Executive Assistant for Administration
  - Patti Horst as Executive Assistant for Programs
3. Interim NRIT Director: the Rev. Dr. Laurie Jungling
4. Mark Goetz as new Hunger Coordinator
5. Appointed Mutual Ministry Committee for Bishop: Peter Christ, Dan Heskett, Maryann Morgenstern, Wava Goetz

**Ministries in Transition:**

1. Lutheran Social Services of Montana: The LSS-MT Board will be looking at proposals for restructuring on October 13. New board members were appointed: Steve Van Gilder, Kathy Slehofer, and Bruce Kolasch.
2. Northern Rockies Institute of Theology: The NRIT Advisory Committee is looking for models and options for when the interim director moves on in a year. Al Beyer was appointed to a second 3 year term on the NRIT committee.
3. The Candidacy Committee is being restructured both because of a dissolution of the Region I multisynodical candidacy committee, and because candidacy responsibility will be moving from Tom Lee, adjunct staff for candidacy, to the Associate to the Bishop. Avis Anderson was appointed to a 4 year term on the candidacy committee.

**Structure and Vision:**

1. The Council organized into committees and leadership. Two clusters are without representation, because of resignations or expired terms. The Golden Triangle Cluster needs a lay female representative, and the Great Divide needs a lay female representative, to begin at the February meeting. If a vacancy occurs, the constitution authorized the Bishop to appoint, and the Council to affirm. But the Bishop welcomes nominations from the clusters!

2. As Bishop, I reported on my vision for the synod, noting that much of it was reflected in the service of Installation. I listed 5 things I hoped our synod would be:
  - a. A church that identified itself by Word and Sacrament ministry.
  - b. A church that is open and hospitable to the neighbor, to the stranger, both ecumenically and interfaith.
  - c. A people who have ownership of this church, "we" not "they," "us" not "them."  
Participation, participation, participation!
  - d. A church that savors learning on all levels and for all people.
  - e. A church that looks outward, not inward.

If you want to see my report, I'd be happy to email you a copy.

3. The council looked at the Vision and Mission statements adopted previously, looked at the responses to the council survey done in conjunction with the election, and brainstormed on a series of questions about the relationship of congregations, synods and churchwide.

### **Continuing Education Guidelines:**

The council adopted a change in the guidelines for continuing education funds, to reflect the churchwide recommendation:

\$700/annually to be contributed by the congregation/ministry

\$300/ annually to be contributed by the individual

The 50 hours recommendation remains.

### **Synod Assembly:**

1. The Synod Assembly and Theological Conference is June 6-8, 2008 in Billings, with a Global Mission theme.
2. Individuals and congregations will be encouraged to refrain from presenting resolutions that are not directly pertinent to the 2008 meeting, and will be reminded that the 2009 assembly will be an appropriate time to introduce resolutions to pass on the the 2009 churchwide assembly.
3. Voting members to the 2009 Churchwide Assembly will be elected at the 2008 Montana Synod Assembly.
4. The Nominating Committee will be constituted at the February synod council meeting. The following clusters will need to nominate new representatives:
  - Bear Paw: Clergy
  - Fort Peck: Clergy
  - Shepherd: Clergy
  - Crazy Mountain: Lay Female
  - Northeast: Lay Male

Other clusters continue with last year's representatives.

**Communication:** In keeping with the theme of participation, the Council affirmed ways of communicating better within the Synod. Some congregations send out synod prayers and emails to their congregational email lists. We are eager to keep as many people in the synod in touch as we can. Anyone who wants to be on the synod email list is welcome. Let us know. We want to get the word out about what the church is doing, how we are praying, and how we are living out our mission together as God's people.

Thank you, and God bless you!

In Christ's Peace,

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