



LERNing

March 2005

A newsletter of the Lutheran Ecumenical Representatives Network

The Choir Needs the Preaching, Too

-The Rev. Jan Olav Flaaten

I have been the ecumenical representative for the Grand Canyon Synod for 15 years and have seen the pendulum of Christian unity swing both ways. At times, it seemed that the ELCA was gloriously leading the way by forging commitments of “full communion” based on years of substantial dialogue. At other times, it seemed the ELCA itself would fracture over any agreements that were perceived to compromise our Lutheran Confessions.

Wherever the pendulum was swinging, however, as a spokesperson for ecumenism I needed information—I needed inspiration and I needed to be reminded why all this effort was so important. When pastors come up to you and say “My people don’t care about ecumenism – they would fall asleep if I started talking about it” or “We are losing our identity” or “I don’t want Episcopal bishops ordaining our pastors,” then in those moments I need more to work with than just a puzzled glance. The questions that go through my mind are: Why can’t they read? Why don’t they care? What are they worried about?

If I am going to sing the songs of ecumenism, I need good music and good texts, and I need to be encouraged to keep going. The National Workshop on Christian Unity has been a time to preach to the choir because the choir needs the tools to sing the Lord’s song (sometimes in a foreign land). The Workshop, through plenary lectures, or network connections, or after hours conversation, has always given me the encouragement I needed to sing some more, to find yet again another way to live into our call to be the one Body of Christ.

NWCU and LERN to Convene in New Orleans

-The Rev. Scott Cady, LERN President

Each year one of the most important ecumenical meetings in the country is the National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU). Members of dozens of Chris-

tian traditions gather to discuss a vast array of issues related to Christian unity. The Lutheran Ecumenical Representatives Network (LERN) holds its annual meeting at the NWCU, and has major input in the structure and content of each year’s event.

In addition to the plenary sessions, worship services, and joint meetings with our counterparts such as EDEO (Episcopal Diocesan Ecumenical Officers) and the Catholic NADEO (National Association of Diocesan Ecumenical Officers), LERN has at least two meetings of its own. We hear reports from our staff in Chicago, elect regional members to our Executive Board, and learn what is new on the ecumenical front.

This year in New Orleans is shaping up to be a fine LERN event, with one of our seminary professors, Maria Erling, addressing us on the role of seminaries in ecumenical formation.

We hope to see you in New Orleans in April 2005 and again in San Jose, California in 2006!

The 2005 NWCU and LERN!

Monday, April 4 – Thursday, April 7
Sheraton Hotel, New Orleans, LA

www.nwcu.org

Register on-line now!

Reserve hotel rooms separately.

What is LERN?

In the ELCA, the 65 synodical bishops are the ecumenical officers. Bishops appoint a representative to aid them in their synodical ecumenical duties. That person then becomes a member of the Lutheran Ecumenical Representatives Network (LERN). Every synod should be represented in LERN with a vote by either a bishop or designated representative. All other Lutherans at LERN gatherings are welcomed to participate with voice privileges.

LERN meets once a year over three days during the National Workshop on Christian Unity (NWCU). Careful planning of the two programs creates an integrated schedule that is rewarding, convenient, cost-effective and most enjoyable. In a different city each year, the

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events are a unique opportunity for local Lutherans to participate in both LERN and NWCU programs.

Find more information on LERN by visiting the Web site at www.elca.org/ecumenical.

2005 NWCU Headliners

One of the greatest black female preachers in the United States, **Dolores Carpenter**, Professor of Religious Education at the Howard University School of Divinity, will preach at the NWCU Opening Worship Service. The magnificent St. Louis Cathedral near New Orleans' famous Bourbon Street provides the setting on April 4.

The Keynote Speaker for Tuesday's Opening Plenary is Catholic Bishop **Richard Skiba**, Co-Chair of the intriguing Lutheran-Catholic dialogue.

Paul Anderson, Professor of Biblical and Quaker Studies at George Fox University, will lead the Bible study. This Friends scholar was commissioned by the NCCC to respond to Pope John Paul II's letter on Petrine Ministry.

Episcopal Bishop **Carol Joy Galagher**, the first indigenous female bishop in the worldwide Anglican Communion, will close the NWCU with her address at the Thursday Luncheon.

In addition, the outstanding NWCU program also offers 13 captivating seminars and exceptional presenters throughout the event. The LERN program begins early on April 4. Visit www.nwcu.org for more details!

Facilitate Local Reception

A report placed in the registration packet of each voting member at synod assemblies is a way for LERN representatives to update their respective synods on the latest ecumenical relationships and dialogues in process.

How good are you at reporting back following the NWCU? A primary responsibility of LERN representatives is to educate synod councils, synod assemblies, and conference assemblies. It is essential for local ecumenical reception!

Special for Seminarians

Top speakers, current subjects, and valuable information make the NWCU one of the best opportunities of its kind in the United States. Students are treated royally with a special \$15 registration fee per day for the entire Workshop.

From Across the Nation

"The whole NWCU experience has always been very worthwhile. Just to be in the same space with like-

minded Christians who are concerned with serious ecumenical questions is rewarding. I have found that the LERN gatherings with our own Churchwide persons have been helpful and to hear world-renowned church leaders speak from their own perspectives has been informative."

-The Rev. Bruce Lundberg, Auburn, CA

"Each year I look forward to the National Workshop for a number of reasons. First and foremost is the chance to renew friendships and ecumenical contacts. There is also the chance to catch up on the latest happenings on the ecumenical scene and improve our ability to interpret things back in our synods. Finally, there is the chance to meet staff of our national office and get updates. The work of the LERN network continues to grow and attendance at the NWCU is an important part of that growth."

-The Rev. Robert Kriesat, Convent Station, NJ

"My first Workshop was St. Louis in 1991. The NWCU addresses doctrinal issues that cause centuries-old divisions. Here denominational and theological leaders meet and work at understanding and healing. It is good participating with folks from other traditions. We are briefed by ELCA staff and given opportunity to contribute and be involved in ELCA's ecumenical agenda. Everyone is respected and accepted!"

-The Rev. Lloyd Hanson, Sacramento, CA

"I look forward to the personal connections made with people across the Church. The intimacy and trust we build by meeting, talking, worshipping and praying together over the years is the most important part of the NWCU for me. I've been attending the National Workshop on Christian Unity for over 25 years and always appreciate the experience."

-The Rev. Timothy Hungler, Bellevue, KY

Colorful New Orleans

The optional social event arranged especially for NWCU participants is a tour of New Orleans' showcase of carnival at Blaine Kern's Mardi Gras World on April 6. See thousands of sensational sculpted props, floats and breathtaking giant figures, eat, drink, and be merry! Arrange for your tickets in advance.

LERNing Editors

Dr. Jerry Folk, jfolk@tds.net

Diane Lowe, dianelowe@sbcglobal.net

Rev. Dr. Merlyn Satrom, amsatrom@citilink.com