

**2008 Bulletin of Reports
Delaware-Maryland Synod**

CONFERENCES

Washington County Conference

This year has been a great year for growth in the joint ministry of the Washington County Churches in our conference. We began this year under the leadership of Pastor Quentin Fleming who sparked our enthusiasm for joint ministry in the conference. We are grateful for the fine leadership he provided to us.

We have developed a working rapport and trust among our pastors that calls us to see ourselves in the context of joint ministry servicing this county and not just our individual churches. We recognize that the projects and initiatives that we do together serves all the churches and creates a stronger Lutheran identity in our area. Further, we do not see the church as just a collection of people in one place, but a network of people across an area all wanting to serve the Lord by helping each other and those around us. To this end, we have engaged in joint activities which have made us stronger in purpose and mission and have expanded the reach of each of our own congregations. Here is a list of accomplishments for this conference:

- Our Conference Mission Team of 22 people traveled to Alabama in January for the fourth time rebuilding another house destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.
- With the help of the Colehower Fund, we engaged a project to have a multiple location 30-hour famine for our youth. This famine invited youth in all the high schools of our county to the designated locations. We had speakers from ONE Campaign, Sojourners, Save Darfur Coalition, World Vision, and local food bank operations.
- For both Easter and Christmas this year, we advertized in the local paper as a conference listing each church and their holiday services. This half page ad was a terrific success in creating a unified Lutheran identity across the county.
- The Pastors met in an off site planning retreat at Deep Creek Lake. This was a relaxing and wonderful event of planning, support, and collegiality.
- We started a modified pericope called Pastor Study and Support Time (PSST). This has been a true blessing as it has brought the pastors together in word, prayer, and conversation.
- In late October we arranged a joint Reformation Service at Trinity Lutheran in Hagerstown. We have 30 people in the choir and thirteen pastors attending. It was a wonderful service of Lutheran identity and unity.
- We have offered three regional blue Christmas services. These services allow those that are morning to affirm and address their sorrow and their grief during the holidays. These services were very well received across the area.

- In response to the thoughtful and impassioned Synod Assembly on Racism, we have agreed, as a conference, to engage in discussions with the African American clergy in the area to build a better relationship and to identify joint objectives as we walk together toward God's call for justice for all.
- In response to "Opening Windows, Opening Doors," 17 of our council leaders have met to explore possibilities of joint ministry and we look forward to tangible results in 2009.
- We have been planning for a pulpit switch, where pastors go to each other's churches, and a joint contemporary service. Both initiatives are to happen in early 2009.

Our conference is indebted to the spirit of service and sense of call of our pastors to broaden their reach to our whole county in a unified and collective way. Truly that is really spreading the Gospel and servicing our Lord. We look forward to our conference meeting some new and wonderful challenges in 2009 by working together as one Church in Washington County.

The Rev. Gerard Johnson, dean