

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

### **OFFICE OF BISHOP**

#### **Coordinator for Communication**

Sometimes I think I have whiplash from the speed at which technology advances. Each time I think my aging brain can't accommodate one more way to communicate, somebody invents something new (or makes affordable something previously out of reach), and off we go. The year 2008 certainly proved true in that regard.

The synod took a major step forward into the New Technology age with the debut of our first video on YouTube. Visit our "channel," [www.youtube.com/demdsynod](http://www.youtube.com/demdsynod), to see the six videos available now. Bishop Jerry Knoche filmed four Advent devotions for 2008, and there are two videos filmed at "Opening Windows, Opening Doors," designed to aid congregation councils in their ministry.

Another major advance in technology came about when not one, but two different list-serv providers (the folks who enable The E-Letter, our electronic news service, to be distributed) collapsed. Beginning in September, we switched to a more sophisticated provider, Constant Contact, which has enabled photos and much greater flexibility in formatting than the two previous providers. Because we added nearly 100 new subscribers as a result of "Opening Windows, Opening Doors," Constant Contact's online master database was invaluable. If your congregation is considering switching to an electronic newsletter or expanding your electronic distribution list, please contact me for more information about Constant Contact, which is part of the ELCA Advantage Program. A specific template for congregational newsletters, incorporating the ELCA's new "God's work. Our hands" tagline and logo, is available.

We also delved into the exciting world of online surveys this year, thanks to the free services of SurveyMonkey.com. The first survey, "Should FaithLines Go Green," was conducted by paper as well and resulted in the decision that subscribers would be offered the option of continuing with a paper subscription delivered by U.S. mail or an electronic subscription. The second survey asks rostered leaders and lay people for feedback on the synod website as Pr. Carl Myers, Grace Lutheran, Lutherville, MD, who graciously continues as the synod's volunteer webmaster, and I consider a major overhaul to the site.

You may have noticed two earlier references to "Opening Windows, Opening Doors." That's how I spent quite a bit of time in 2008 - serving on the planning committee and presenting at all five of what the planning team came to call "OWOD." Some 62 congregations, about one-third of all the synod's congregations, attended one of the five day-long congregation council training events. Most of the 307 participants came as a team with their fellow council members. Some councils brought 10 or more people to a day filled with presentations on topics like the importance of council Bible study, legal issues for councils, and team building. Response to the events was so positive that two more have been scheduled for 2009: May 2 at St. Stephen's Lutheran, Arbutus, MD, and Nov. 7 at Grace Lutheran, Westminster, MD. Watch The E-Letter and the website for registration information.

The OWOD planning team volunteers deserve major kudos for their devotion and creative work. The synod owes an enormous thank you to planning team chair Donna Kent and to team members Peg Sheeler, Mykel Hitselberger, and Karen Simpson, for going the extra mile. Assistant to the Bishop Ginny Price and I worked with the team, with significant assists in terms of preparing materials and handling registrations from synod staffers Pat Walton and Jennifer Baxter. Our volunteer presenters deserve a large helping of gratitude as well, but listing them would put me well over my space allotment, I'm afraid.

Also in 2008, I continued to "blog" at DeMdSynod.blogspot.com; handled the technology for the Synod Assembly, a task which increases dramatically each year; continued with FaithLines, our print leadership publication, though, admittedly, not on as regular a schedule as I'd like; worked on the website; and made lots of new young adult (and old adult) contacts on Facebook. Ongoing thanks to our Tech Team from Grace Lutheran, Westminster, Md., who continue to make the assembly technology what it is!

Finally, I had a wonderful chance for some continuing education when I attended the biennial ELCA Communicators Gathering in Chicago in August. This event continues to grow - not only in the number of participants but also in the value of the education it provides. I had additional continuing education opportunities closer to home through the Greater Chesapeake Chapter of the Religion Communicators Council, of which I'm honored to be the president.

Thanks to everyone - volunteers, fellow synod staff, fellow ELCA communicators, and the communications staff in Chicago - for always being willing to answer my questions, respond to my e-mails, and generally support my ministry. I value every contact I have with you and look forward to working together with you in 2009.

***Linda Nansteel Lovell, coordinator for communication***