

## Pastor Roy's Sermon from June 3, 2012

Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last week I mentioned that the Doctrine of the Trinity reminds us that God is all about relationships. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit experience unity in mutual love. We also live in relationship with God, one another, and creation. In the Gospel reading today we are reminded that our family of faith can be as important as our biological family. Jesus asks, "Who is my family?" "You who do the will of God are my family." Nurturing healthy relationships is key.

Relationships are vital within the church locally, nationally, and globally. Last Friday and Saturday the Lower Susquehanna Synod of the ELCA gathered to worship and to discuss matters of how we relate to one another and the rest of creation. We heard about ministries throughout our Synod carried out by individual churches, just as we have the Caring Closet and movie night, Christmas dinner for the New Hope Youth, and will be offering a break stop for bikers raising money for a the Wellspan benevolence pharmacy this Saturday.

At Synod Assembly we also heard about all the ministries our synod carries out through everyone's gifts to the general fund called benevolence, or mission support. The ministries in which we engage as a synod are no different than the ministries of our churches or parish. The amazing thing about the ministries of the Synod is that they reach out with a far broader scope than we could ever meaningfully do even as 3 churches. We band together as some 250 churches in order to do ministry in a way that provides accountability for a wide range of ministries of mercy and the proclamation of the good news of God's love.

The synod's budget is 3.5 million dollars. Of that, just over 1 million is for direct administrative support for churches. Over the time of my ministry here among you, we have asked for help from Synod staff. We have engaged the bishop, bishop's assistants, and administrative staff. When Barren's was working on their 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I contacted Brenda Rockwell and within a week she had combed through the synod's records and filled in some of the gaps in pastor's names and dates of service. It was a small thing, but she enjoyed doing it. When we need a supply pastor, the synod provides the list, in fact I don't even consult the list because Pastor Virginia Cover, one of the assistants to the bishop tells me who the best choice (say for St. John's Franklin) will be for us. I've spoken with Tom McKee, Synod secretary many times and he came and met with the parish council last summer to help us through our transition with Pastor Naomi's departure into a new ministry.

Nothing they do is wasted effort, energy, or resources. They are a valuable resource for me and have been for our churches many times over the past years. Ministry is always inseparable from administrative work. Helping people requires a lot of background work which is not glamorous.

I have a list of other ministries our Synod supports with our benevolence/mission support dollars.

- Region 8 (6 mid-Atlantic synods) 14,292 14,200 [Synod Partners 3,200 3,200 ]
- Seminary 200,000 200,000 College & University 1,000 1,000
- Social Ministry Organizations 6,000 6,000
- Outdoor Ministry 80,000 80,000
- PA Council of Churches 18,000 18,000
- St. Barnabas Center for Ministry 0 0
- Lutheran Planned Giving Central & NW PA 7,600 7,600

- Care of Rostered Persons 3,775 3,475
  - Psychological Services 750 750
  - Leadership Support 5,495 5,300
  - Communication resources 14,175 14,420
  - Beginning Ministry 450 450
  - Care of Congregations 1,750 1,000
  - Conference of Deans 1,540 1,540
  - Resource Network 175 175
- Resource Center 8,625 8,125
- Stewardship 2,325 1,500
- Evangelism & Mission 55,718 46,293
- Ecumenical Programs 800 300
- Synodical Worship 1,875 1,275
- Candidacy Committee 12,100 19,500
- Youth & Young Adult ministry 8,900 8,900
- Campus Ministry 98,200 98,200
- Church in Society 3,100 1,000
- Global Mission 625 355
- World Hunger 535 100 -committees which help churches contribute to global causes like world hunger
- Coordination of Relief Projects 1,200 1,200
- advocacy Ministry 8,050 8,050 (state level)
- Assembly Planning 11,000 10,000
- Synod Council, Exec Cmte, and Standing Cmtes 2,500 1,000

ELCA Churchwide Ministries 1,610,000 1,627,500

60 new congregations, 163 congregations that are focusing on mission in a new way.

Grants for specific congregational ministries, 240 missionaries in 50 countries

UN and Federal advocacy for issues the church supports

26 colleges and universities, 8 seminaries which train lay and ordained ministers,

180 campus ministries from which come most of our pastors and lay associates in ministry, and partnerships with Lutheran World Federation, World Council of Churches, and National Council of Churches

Yes, our mission support dollars are spread over a wide range of ministries, but by those dollars we are connected with hundreds of Central PA Lutheran Churches, and thousands of US Lutheran churches and churches all over the world. Mission support has been declining in most of the churches in our synod and in our 3 churches as well. It's important to remember that ministry happens at the Synod level which we cannot perform by ourselves.

A temptation is to focus our resources on what we can touch and see here in Dillsburg. We all know that the reign of God extends far beyond Dillsburg. One of the most effective ways to touch the rest of the world is through our benevolence/ mission support donations since there is accountability in these dollars. Yes, mistakes have been made at the Synod level in the past, but we've gained a higher level of oversight as a result of these. Let us continue to expand our vision so that love and grace may be multiplied among us and beyond us.

Amen.