

What I Did Over My Summer Vocation
Director of Learning Ministries
Report for the September '09 Council Meeting

June

June saw the end of the church school year for children's and youth classes. Our adult classes are now going year-round. In June, our Confirmands affirmed their baptismal vows, coming into full membership in our parish. The week prior to their affirmation of baptism, the Confirmands along with parents, mentors, church leaders, pastor, and vicar enjoyed a traditional semi-formal meal followed by the rehearsal for the upcoming rite.

On June 14, Vicar Jeanne Larsen led a Special Topics Class on the language of Lutheran worship. Jeanne, a classical scholar herself, shared word use, origin, and story for terms such as "Kyrie," "Eucharist," and even "order," as in order of worship.

Women of Trinity exchanged officers on the board, Connie Dollase now serving as president for the coming year (June to June). The Women of Trinity also adopted a new constitution, based on the model of the national Women of the ELCA. Lutheran Men in Mission also welcomed new officers and a new constitution (though the LMM year goes from September to September).

July

In early July, Jack Bush, George Enney, and I scouted out a new location for the 2010 Men's Retreat. The site we selected is the Philip Bongiorno Conference Center west of Carlisle, administered by the Pen-Del Conference of the Assemblies of God Church. We also moved the retreat date to April the weekend after Easter (Saturday, April 10). The conference center is both comfortable and rustic. Response to the change in venue for our retreat has been high—with men already asking if they can stay at the conference center the night before the retreat begins.

In the middle of July, a new Prayer Labyrinth was dedicated, the culmination of a project partnered between Trinity Lutheran and Mount Calvary Episcopal—and the subject of Vicar Cheri Korte's seminary internship study. Cheri's year-long effort produced not something in concrete but in stone nonetheless: a labyrinth, set next to Mount Calvary, for the use of the community.

The John L. Bush Bible Study Class hosted the adult Bible study class from Zion Lutheran in Harrisburg with a picnic at Negley Park on a Sunday morning in July. After breakfast, there was a class session. Later in the month, the class from Zion hosted our class to a dinner at Tall Cedars Lodge in Harrisburg. This is the twenty-fourth year these classes have had this exchange.

The last week of July—the last days, in fact (the twenty-seventh through the thirty-first) was Vacation Church School at Trinity. Throughout July, Amy Koch, our VCS director, held training sessions for the many program leaders and helpers that make our Vacation Church School safe and successful. The theme for VCS this year was "Crocodile Rock," and so Fellowship Hall and the classrooms and hallways were decked out to look like, well, a bayou deck. When Vacation

Church School happened, there were more than a hundred children attending and well over fifty adults and youth helping. Amy, by the way, serves as VCS director as part of her contribution as a member at Trinity. She works at the church as Children's Choir Director, but her work in VCS is strictly voluntary. Next year, we voyage on the high seas!

August

Throughout the summer, Heather Rose, Trinity Preschool Playgroup Director, oversaw the hire of new staff persons. Our last position to be filled was taken care of in August. Heather held her first meeting with the full staff in August in order to coordinate the start of the new school year. The last few weeks of summer are an actually tricky time for Heather, for this is when families sometimes make decisions to cancel an earlier registration or request an opening to come into the program at the proverbial last minute. But our preschool staff is complete, and our classes are full. (We have a teaching staff of ten and enroll close to a hundred students.) At the preschool board meeting held at the end of the month, teaching contracts were approved as was the 2009-2010 school calendar and the year's budget.

In early August over a couple of Sunday mornings, I led a Special Topics Class on spiritual practices. Spiritual practices are those exercises and experiences that enhance a life of daily devotion to God. Spiritual practices, in effect, strengthen our life with God and our part in understanding and being close to the presence of God. For homework, so to speak, I assigned the class members each to walk our Prayer Labyrinth near Mount Calvary Church. The experiences of walking the labyrinth were shared at the second session; and the depth of reflection while in the labyrinth and afterward was impressive, even palpable.

I spent the rest of August confirming our teaching staff for Sunday Church School's resumption in September. I am pleased to say that all of our lead teachers are returning to the program save one, a teacher whose husband has been promoted to Admiral and whose family has been assigned to Hawaii for the next couple of years. I consulted with the lead teachers to confirm class schedules and curriculum preferences—and then secured the resources needed.

Over the summer I also continued my monthly spiritual retreats and my process of affiliating with a Franciscan community. I also joined Trinity Lutheran Church in Mechanicsburg (Trinity's mother church), which is my parish church. And I have begun the process of becoming a candidate for Diaconal Ministry in the ELCA by consulting over the summer with Pastor Tom McKee and completing the first round of candidacy applications.

As I look ahead to the new school year, I am gratified by many things—among them the many folk at Trinity I am delighted to work with both from the staff and the membership. I look forward to a new class on parenting beginning in September. And I anticipate the new school year with an educator's eagerness over the start of new times and chances for learning, for spiritual growth.

Respectfully and gratefully submitted,

Christopher