

BRINGING CARING CONVERSATIONS TO OUR CONGREGATIONS - 2

A clergy and laity in-service day hosted by the Kitchener/Waterloo Conference

An Invitation

Grace be yours and peace.

As you will likely know, “Caring Conversations” is a model commended by National Church Council to ELCIC congregations wherein “members ... are able to listen to the experiences of gay and lesbian people and their families.” The model was overwhelmingly affirmed by the ELCIC National Convention in Regina, in 1999.

Last spring, we —Pastors Mark Harris and André Lavergne— spoke at the regular monthly gathering of K-W clergy on our experience initiating and leading “Caring Conversations” in our parishes. As we suggested then, our experience with Caring Conversations, in our own communities, has been very, very positive.

This fall, at the request of the Kitchener/Waterloo Conference, Mark and I led a day-long gathering of parish pastors in which clergy were encouraged and helped to initiate the Caring Conversations process in their own congregations. Some 90-95 people participated in the event. Another 10 or so received materials by mail as they were unable to be present.

Since then, we have put together a second day-long event, this one for *both clergy and laity*. It will be held on Saturday, February 22, from 8:30 am to 3:30 pm, at Saint John’s Lutheran Church, Waterloo.

This invitation, then, is being extended to clergy and lay people of the Kitchener/Waterloo Conference and four neighbouring conferences —Toronto, Hamilton/Niagara, London and Georgian Bay. This in-service event should prove especially helpful to pastors, congregational leaders and members of such committees or groups as might sponsor a Caring Conversation (adult learning team, pastoral care team, council, service or witness group, etc.).

Agenda

While details are still fluid, in general, the shape of our day will be as follows:

8:30 - 9:00 am	Arrival. <i>Coffee is on!</i>
9:00 - 9:30 am	Gathering Worship — Dean Stephen Weber presides and Assistant to the Bishop Phil Heinze preaches at a gathering Service of Holy Communion.
9:30 - 9:45 am	Welcome. Introductions. Housekeeping.
9:45 - 11:00 am	Lutherans, Grace and the Bible — Whole-group presentation by Tim Hegedus with an opportunity for questions and answers.
11:00 - 11:15 am	Break
11:15 - 12:30 noon	Workshop I (the same 8 workshops are offered twice)
12:30 - 1:15 pm	Brown-Bag Lunch

1:15 - 2:30 pm	Workshop II (the same 8 workshops are offered twice)
2:30 - 2:45 pm	Break
2:45 - 3:30 pm	Concluding small-group conversation and whole-group reflection.
3:30 pm	Closing Prayer. Godspeed.

Workshops

Participants are invited to choose 2 of the following 8 workshops:

- 1. The Bible and Same-Sex Passages/Issues: Questions, Concerns, Resources** ~ Led by Harold Remus and Loretta Jaunzarins, this workshop provides an opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns, listen to and share with others, and find out what resources are available to learn more.
- 2. Old Testament Texts and Hebrew Culture** ~ Sarah Dille will present background information about the culture of ancient Israel and how Israel's understanding of human sexuality was shaped by the cultural values of fertility and honour. We will then examine the Biblical texts which are most often cited in discussions of homosexuality.
- 3. The Bible, Diversity and Unity in the Church** ~ Led by Tim Hegedus, this workshop will look at New Testament texts dealing with Christian diversity and unity. How much diversity is allowed in the church? What is the basis for our unity as Christians?
- 4. Making an Ethical Decision: Shall We Do a Caring Conversation?** ~ In this workshop, Bob Kelly uses a case-study approach to ethical decision-making to help participants analyze their own process for coming to moral conclusions.
- 5. Agreeing How to Disagree** ~ Difference of opinion and conflict are always difficult for Christian communities. In this workshop led by Colleen Shantz, we will consider what typically happens when there is a difference of opinion and will discuss ways to prepare ourselves to diffuse their destructive elements and build on the positive.
- 6. Preaching the Hard Texts** ~ Led by David Schnasa Jacobsen, this workshop will consider interpretive problems and homiletical strategies for dealing with difficult texts which have been used in discussions around homosexuality.
- 7. Caring Conversations: A Lay Perspective** ~ Henriette Stumper and Randy Schnarr reflect on their experience as leaders and participants in a congregational Caring Conversation.
- 8. Doing A Caring Conversation: A Pastoral Approach** ~ In a conversational environment, Mark Harris and André Lavergne lead workshop participants through their experience of bringing Caring Conversations to their congregations.

Our Leaders

A member of Christ, Waterloo, and an ordained Lutheran pastor, Dr. **Sarah Dille** is an Assistant Professor of Old Testament Theology at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. She recently completed revisions to Mixing Metaphors: God as Father and Mother in the Interplay of Deutero-Isaiah's Metaphors, and is currently serving on an LWF consultation in Theological Education having to do with seminary curriculum and gender issues.

Recently retired as Dean of the Chapel, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, and a member of the ELCIC's National Church Council, Pastor **Mark Harris** serves with Pastor Tanya Varner in a team ministry at Mount Zion Lutheran Church, Waterloo. Pastor Harris is working on a Doctor of Ministry degree (liturgical studies) at the University of Toronto.

A member of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, and an ordained Lutheran pastor, Dr. **Tim Hegedus** is an Assistant Professor of New Testament Theology at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. He is currently working on a project on Biblical interpretation in the early church, as well as revising his doctoral thesis to submit it for publication.

In his fifth year as Assistant to the Bishop, Eastern Synod, **Phil Heinze** works in the areas of convention management, communication, specialized ministries and service (justice and compassion) ministries. A member of Reformation Lutheran Church, Kitchener, he is married to Carolin. They have three children and an empty nest.

An ordained pastor of the United Methodist Church attending Trinity Lutheran Church, Shantz Station, Dr. **David Schnasa Jacobsen** is an Associate Professor of Homiletics at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. He is the author of two recent books on preaching: Preaching in the New Creation: The Promise of New Testament Apocalyptic Texts (Westminster John Knox, 1999) and, together with Dr. Guenter Wasserberg, Preaching Luke-Acts (Abingdon, 2001).

Pastor **Loretta Jaunzarins** serves at Matthew's Lutheran Church, East Zorra. She is doing graduate studies in philosophy and Biblical studies at the Institute for Christian Studies, Toronto, and is involved in Parents for Community Living (Waterloo) and the Boarding Homes Ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (Toronto).

A member of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Kitchener, and an ordained Lutheran pastor, Dr. **Robert Kelly** is Professor of Systematic Theology at Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. Active in a number of church-related concerns, Dr. Kelly has taught theology and ethics at two seminaries for over 20 years.

Together with Pastor Nadine Nicholds, **André Lavergne** serves in a team ministry at Trinity Lutheran Church, New Hamburg. Pastor Lavergne chairs the ELCIC's Program Committee for Worship, represents the ELCIC at the international Consultation on Common Texts and, together with Pastor Wendell Grahman, maintains Lift Up Your Hearts, the ELCIC's Worship and Spirituality web site <www.worship.ca>.

A member of St. Mark's, Kitchener, Dr. **Harold Remus** is Professor Emeritus, Religion & Culture, Wilfrid Laurier University, retired Adjunct Professor, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary and Past President of the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies. An ordained Lutheran pastor, he was the Founding Managing Editor of *Religious Studies Review* and is the author of many books and articles related to New Testament studies.

Raised in the Missouri Synod, **Randy Schnarr** is a member of Mount Zion Lutheran Church, Waterloo, where he serves on the Congregational Council. Mr. Schnarr is a sales representative for Porter Cable.

A graduate of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary and member of Advent Lutheran Church, Toronto, **Colleen Shantz** is completing her PhD in New Testament studies at St. Michael's College, Toronto School of Theology. In September, 2003, Ms. Shantz will take-up a tenure-track position as Assistant Professor of New

Testament at St. Michael's College.

A member of Mount Zion Lutheran Church, Waterloo, **Henriette Stumper** is a liturgical Assisting Minister and the Coordinator of Mount Zion's Community Kitchen. She is affiliated with the Optometry Clinic at the University of Waterloo.

Dean of the Kitchener/Waterloo Conference, Pastor **Stephen Weber** serves in a team ministry with Pastor Doug Kranz at our host church, St. John's, Waterloo. The Webers —Steve, Janet and their son Kyle— serve as a foster family for Waterloo Region Family and Children's Services.

Registration and Notes

1. Please confirm your interest to Pastor Steve Weber <rev.weber@stjohnslutheran.on.ca> by Friday, February 14, 2002. Please provide the name of your congregation together with the names of participants.
2. By Monday, February 17, we should have a list together of participants. Should you wish to car-pool, drop us a line and we will help to identify others attending from your area.
3. There is no cost for the day. Please bring a brown-bag lunch. The K/W Conference will supply coffee, tea and juice.
4. Please convey this invitation to people in your conference who may not have access to electronic mail.

Directions to Saint John's, Waterloo

Saint John's Lutheran Church is located at 22 Willow Street, Waterloo. The phone number is (519) 886-1880.

From Hwy 86... exit at Bridgeport Road;
 take Bridgeport Road (east) to Moore Avenue;
 turn left (south) on Moore Avenue to Allan Street;
 turn right (east) on Allan Street to Luther Manor;
 turn right into the church parking lot.

Welcome!

We hope that you can join us on Saturday, February 22, at Saint John's Lutheran Church, Waterloo.

Please confirm your interest by Friday, February 14, to Pastor Steve Weber, Dean of the K/W Conference. He may be reached by e-mail at <rev.weber@stjohnslutheran.on.ca> or by phone at (519) 886-1880.

Further information is available from either of the undersigned. Simply drop one of us a note. We look forward to greeting you on February 22 and wish you well in your Advent journey.

All blessings.

André Lavergne <lavergne@telc.ca> *and*
Mark Harris <mtzion@mzlc.ca>