

## BRINGING CARING CONVERSATIONS TO OUR CONGREGATIONS ~ 3

*A clergy and laity event hosted by the Kitchener/Waterloo Conference*

Grace be yours and peace.

In the spring of 2002, Pastor Mark Harris and I spoke at the regular monthly gathering of Kitchener-Waterloo clergy on our experience initiating and leading "Caring Conversations" in our parishes. "Caring Conversation" is a model overwhelmingly affirmed by the 1999 Regina convention, wherein "members of the ELCIC ... are able to listen to the experiences of gay and lesbian people and their families." Our experience with Caring Conversations, in our own communities, has been very, very positive.

### Caring Conversations ~ 1 & 2

Out of the spring 2002 meeting, there came several requests that a fuller day be offered to encourage and to help parish pastors to initiate the Caring Conversations process in their own congregations. As a result, Caring Conversations ~ 1, a clergy in-service day, sponsored by the Kitchener/Waterloo Conference, was held in October, 2002. In the course of this clergy gathering, there emerged a consensus that a second day-long event be offered, this one to include both clergy and lay people. Under the sponsorship of the K/W Conference, Caring Conversations ~ 2 was held in February, 2003.

### Invitation to Caring Conversations ~ 3

With the encouragement of people who attended Caring Conversations ~ 2, we have now put together a Caring Conversations ~ 3 event to take place on **Saturday, October 25, 2003**, at Mount Zion Lutheran Church, Waterloo. At the event, we will offer/model a *Caring Conversation*.

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. **Caring Conversations ~ 3** should prove especially helpful to pastors, congregational leaders and members of such groups as might sponsor a Caring Conversation (adult learning team, pastoral care team, council, service or witness group, etc.). The event will also be helpful to the many people reflecting on the *Reconciling in Christ* "Affirmation of Welcome" motion coming before our Synod Assembly next summer.

### Caring Conversations Website

In connection with these Caring Conversations events, a web page has been created called *Bringing Caring Conversations to Our Congregations*. Go to the website of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, New Hamburg [www.telc.ca](http://www.telc.ca) and click on "Caring Conversations." You will find six sections offering many helpful resources and links...

1. K/W Workshops (event invitations/agendas)
2. Workshop Materials (PDF files of workshop papers)
3. Erwin Buck: [Studies on Homosexuality and the Church](#) (complete text)
4. Eastern Synod Conversation (RIC "Affirmation of Welcome" motion)
5. Current Canadian Realities: Context for Conversation (helpful links)
6. Selected Online Resources (helpful links)

## Agenda

9:00 - 9:30 am	Arrival. <i>Coffee is on!</i>
9:30 - 10:00 am	Gathering Worship — Dean Stephen Weber presides at a gathering Service of Holy Communion.
10:00 - 10:15 am	Welcome. Introductions. Housekeeping.
10:15 - 11:30 am	Caring Conversation
11:30 - 11:55 am	Whole-Group Reflection.
11:55 am	Closing Prayer. Godspeed.

## Our Leaders

Recently retired as Dean of the Chapel, Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, and a former 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.

Together with Pastor Nadine Nicholds, **André Lavergne** serves in a team ministry at Trinity Lutheran Church, New Hamburg. Pastor Lavergne is a member (on leave) of the ELCIC's Program Committee for Worship, represents the ELCIC at the Consultation on Common Texts and, together with Pastor Wendell Grahlman, maintains Lift Up Your Hearts [www.worship.ca](http://www.worship.ca), the ELCIC's acclaimed Worship and Spirituality web site.

**Eric Reble**, Pastor Emeritus of St. Peter's, Kitchener, has served in world missions (India), church planting (St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Bridgeport) and other congregational and church-wide ministries. Together with his wife, Jean, Eric is a member of St. Peter's Kitchener, where he continues as a volunteer member of the pastoral team.

A WLU graduate in Social Work, **Jane Reble** works at Extend-A-Family (Waterloo Region) with persons having physical and/or developmental challenges, and their families. Jane is a member of Olive Branch Mennonite Church, Waterloo. Olive Branch belongs to the Supportive Congregations Network of Mennonite and Brethren churches. These churches are publicly welcoming of people without regard to sexual orientation.

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 a major tool company.

Dean of the Kitchener/Waterloo Conference, Pastor **Stephen Weber** serves in a team ministry with Pastor Doug Kranz at 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 by Friday, October 17, to Pastor Steve Weber, Dean of the K/W Conference. Pastor Weber may be reached by e-mail at [rev.weber@stjohnslutheran.on.ca](mailto:rev.weber@stjohnslutheran.on.ca) or by phone at (519) 886-1880.
2. Please provide the name of your congregation together with the names of participants.
3. By Monday, October 20, 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. In the interest of good stewardship, we invite you to car-pool wherever possible.
4. The event will take place at Mount Zion Lutheran Church, Waterloo. Mount Zion is located at 29 Westmount Road South, Waterloo. The nearest major cross-street is Erb (Other major cross streets include University, Victoria and Ottawa). For specific directions, please call (519) 886-5820 or e-mail [mharris@mzlc.ca](mailto:mharris@mzlc.ca) .
5. There is no cost for the morning. The K/W Conference will supply coffee, tea and juice.
6. Please convey this invitation to people in your conference who may not have access to electronic mail.

## Caring Conversations ~ 4

We are contemplating the possibility of a **Caring Conversations ~ 4** event as a bridge into the 2004 Eastern Synod Assembly.

The event would take place on Saturday, **March 6, 2004** at St. Stephen Lutheran Church, Kitchener. We would hope to explore the *Reconciling in Christ* "Affirmation of Welcome" motion, look to the experience of other congregations, communities and synods which have embraced an "Affirmation of Welcome," and receive any wisdom that Synod Council or others might have to offer by then. Keep the date open!

Details will be forthcoming in due course. **Caring Conversations ~ 4** would be especially helpful to people contemplating the "Affirmation of Welcome" motion to come before next summer's Eastern Synod Assembly.

## Welcome!

We hope that you can join us on Saturday, October 25, at Mount Zion, Waterloo.

Further information is available from either of the undersigned. Simply drop one of us a note. We look forward to greeting you on October 25 and wish you well in your Autumn ministry.

All blessings.

André Lavergne [lavergne@telc.ca](mailto:lavergne@telc.ca) and  
Mark Harris [mharris@mzlc.ca](mailto:mharris@mzlc.ca)