2014 GACAC Business Meeting and Faith Conference

SARA MASTERS, Assistant Director for Church Relations, Center for Servant Leadership

27th Annual Association of Congregations Business Meeting to be held Saturday, April 26

From the beginning of the Reformation to today, the Lutheran Church has embraced a wide range of significant commitments to children and their well-being. Martin Luther wrote his famous Small Catechism to help parents bring up children in the faith, and Lutheran churches today engage parents in their youth and family ministry programs. In addition, Luther attended to the needs of orphans and the poor, laying the foundation for the vast network of orphanages, hospitals, schools, colleges, and social service agencies established by Lutherans in the past and around the world today.

In his reflections on the priesthood of all believers and vocation, Luther underscored the duties and responsibilities not only of adults to children but also of children to adults. Lutheran congregations and colleges continue to recognize the gifts and talents of children and young people, by seeing that they are also called to love and serve others and contribute to the common good not just in the future, but now.

In light of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation and the urgent needs of children today, the 2014 Gustavus Faith Conference aims to deepen our understanding of Lutheranism’s rich heritage regarding children and to renew and revitalize our own commitments to children and young people in our midst and around the world.

This year’s keynote speaker, Dr. Marcia J. Bunge, Bernhardson Distinguished Chair of Lutheran Studies and professor of religion at Gustavus Adolphus College, will provide both the theological grounding for and concrete examples of Lutheran commitments to children in her address, “Understanding Lutheran Commitments to Children and Youth: Theological Foundations, Historical Perspectives, and Contemporary Initiatives.” Over the past few years, Bunge has spoken and published widely on various religious perspectives on children and obligations to them, editing or co-editing and contributing to four foundational volumes on the subject.

A panel of speakers in the afternoon will reflect more deeply on the grounds for our commitments and our responsibilities to children today in the areas of child advocacy and faith formation. Panelists include Jodi Harpstead, CEO of Lutheran Social Service; Daniel Lee, vice president of external relations, Lutheran World Relief; the Rev. Jeremy Myers, associate professor for youth and family ministry, Augsburg College; and Tim Schmidt, managing partner, Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.
From the Director

PASTOR GRADY ST. DENNIS, Director for Church Relations

God’s blessings to you from the Center for Servant Leadership at Gustavus. With the start of the new academic year well under way the excitement on campus is high! We have a number of wonderful additions to our campus community this fall with Chaplains Siri Erickson and Brian Konkol beginning their ministry at Gustavus and Sara Masters joining our Center for Servant Leadership team, working with me as the assistant director for Church Relations.

I am sure in your part of the vineyard the energy levels are high as well with the fullness of the new church year unfolding. There are exciting and historic changes in store for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with the installation of the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton as presiding bishop, the first woman to serve the installation of the Rev. Elizabeth Eaton as presiding bishop, the first woman to serve as presiding bishop, and active in the life and growth of Gustavus. My prayer is that this coming year will be one that draws us closer in our work together.

A New Face in the Church Relations Office

This past spring, Marilyn Beyer retired from her position of assistant director of Church Relations. A search ensued to find a new person to take over this very important role. In July, Sara Masters was hired. She officially started at Gustavus on August 1. Many of you have already talked to her or e-mailed with her. She comes to us from the Minneapolis Area Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). In the synod office, her role was the director of communications where she managed the synod’s internal and external communications, including public relations and bishop communications. Prior to the synod, she was at RSM McGladrey as a Web content specialist in national marketing; communications manager at Colonial Church of Edina; and at Thrivent Financial for Lutherans in many different communications roles. She has more than 15 years of experience in the communications industry.

Masters grew up in Minneapolis and attended Augsburg College, where she studied mathematics. She also has her master’s degree in mathematics. She also has her master’s degree in leadership from Augsburg. She lives in Shakopee with her husband, Jason, and 8-year-old daughter, Maren.
New Chaplains Commit to Deepening and Expanding Daily Worship

Gustavus Adolphus College announced on July 1 that the Reverend Siri C. Erickson and the Reverend Brian E. Konkol had been hired to serve as Chaplains of the College. The two officially joined the college community on August 1 and are carefully discerning how the College will practice daily worship during the scheduled 10–10:20 a.m. chapel time beginning this Fall Semester.

“We understand the challenges that arise out of the changes in leadership, and we will do our best to listen, learn, and grow into our new roles with the utmost levels of appreciation and sensitivity,” Chaplain Konkol said. “We are deeply honored to follow in the footsteps of a long line of faithful chaplains at Gustavus, and we intend to build upon their numerous contributions.”

Chaplains Erickson and Konkol recently changed the name of daily worship at Gustavus from Daily Chapel to Daily Sabbath. They maintain that the transition is intended to deepen our Lutheran roots and expand our contextual reach as a diverse community that gathers together for a period of rest, renewal, and revitalization.

“We hope that the name change brings a renewed focus to the practice of Daily Sabbath. We are confident that people of various theological perspectives will feel included, and we believe it will inspire an increased level of dialogue surrounding the future of faith and learning at Gustavus,” Chaplains Erickson and Konkol said.

Students, faculty, and staff will notice two major changes in the format of Daily Sabbath. The first is that each day of the week will have a clearly defined focus and each day will feature a distinct experience that relates to an aspect of Sabbath practice. Mondays will be a day of prayer. Tuesdays will feature a speaker who will address a faith-related question and spark discussion about important issues and ideas. Wednesdays will be a continuation of the longstanding tradition of Morning Praise liturgy. Thursdays will feature Christian praise worship led by the Revive team and student, faculty, and staff preachers. Fridays will feature a playful approach, reminding attendees to make room for joy and delight in the midst of the challenges of life.

“The second major change is that we are embracing the whole campus as a sacred space,” Chaplain Erickson said. “In particular, on Mondays and Fridays we will invite people to engage in Sabbath practices in Christ Chapel and beyond, such as online, in the Campus Center, and in a variety of locations around campus. Christ Chapel is the symbolic center of faith on campus, but God’s presence can be known anywhere on campus. We want to help people make the connection between faith, learning, and life by hosting Sabbath practices in a wide range of locations.”

Chaplains Erickson and Konkol say that the new format for Daily Sabbath will be in effect for the fall semester, and that they intend to re-evaluate the format after hearing from a variety of students, faculty, staff, alumni, administrators, and others in the Gustavus community.
TRAVEL WITH GUSTAVUS—
EXPLORING LUTHER’S
REFORMATION AND THE
NAZI HOLOCAUST

Journey on an educational tour of Germany and Poland with Gustavus professor emeritus of Religion Rev. Dr. Darrell Jodock from October 4 to 16, 2014. The first focus of the trip is on the life and teachings of Martin Luther, along with the ongoing significance of his theology. The year 2017 will mark the 500th anniversary of his 95 Theses. Luther was seeking an academic debate, but the document had an unexpected result. Visit sites associated with Luther’s life and examine together Luther’s ideas and their ongoing significance.

The second focus is on the tragedy of the Nazi holocaust and the lessons to be learned. Next year marks the 69th anniversary of the defeat of the Nazis and their efforts to rid Europe of “undesirables”—especially Jews, Gypsies, and Slavs—as well as religious and political opponents. Visit sites in Krakow and Berlin associated with the holocaust.

For more information and to register, visit gustavus.edu/president/tours.

Resources For Your Congregational Ministry

How can Gustavus resources help your congregation in 2013–14?

We have a wealth of resources available to our Association member congregations, and we want to serve you!

Listed below are many of the continuing signature programs from Church Relations in the Center for Servant Leadership. Some congregations use multiple resources every year; others use fewer, or as needed. Many of these ongoing, very affordable programs are listed below:

Confirmation Retreats held on campus may be day or overnight retreats during the academic year. Hostel space is available for overnight reservations. Please book at least 6 to 8 weeks in advance; space is limited for groups over 40. Classrooms and space for recreation are available to meet your programming needs.

Adult Retreats are welcomed in the Retreat Center on campus. Church councils, staffs, and men’s and women’s groups enjoy time to socialize and work together, build relationships, and enjoy the energy of a Lutheran campus.

Individual Clergy Sabbath Retreats are available to Association pastors, usually scheduled during the week.

Partners in Education—more than 30 faculty and staff are available to make presentations on a variety of topics during Sunday morning forums in Association congregations. Church Relations pays for one honorarium per year (until funds are depleted). The congregation pays mileage and also honoraria for subsequent presentations.

Partners in Music—Student vocal and instrumental musical ensembles are available to visit your congregation to assist in worship. Congregation pays honorarium and mileage.

Gustavus Youth Outreach—This student-led fellowship organization seeks to serve the needs of congregational youth programs, assisting in programming with your youth for day or evening, lock-in or retreat settings. Congregation must cover mileage expenses, meals if applicable, cost of supplies or special materials, and housing if needed. A love offering to GYO is appreciated.

Scholarships—The Lutheran Leadership Award is for students from Association congregations attending Gustavus; matching scholarships are available for any students receiving congregational funds to attend Gustavus.

Since the above is not an exhaustive list, please review the full list of resources at any time in our Association Member Handbook, which can be found online at gustavus.edu/churchrelations. To request booking any of these programs, contact Sara Masters in Church Relations, Center for Servant Leadership, at 507-933-7001.
New Church Relations Endowment Announced

by Denise Floe

The Association of Congregations has passed a milestone—25 years of connecting the College and congregations!

In 25 years, there have been 25 annual conventions, filled with voices raised in song during worship, inspiring speakers, informative workshops, and renewed person-to-person relationships. In 25 years, there have been hundreds of middle school students on campus for confirmation retreats. In 25 years, congregations across the Midwest and beyond have been filled with music from the Gustavus choir, band, or orchestra. In 25 years, numerous faculty members have visited congregations, sharing the latest insights from their academic field. Perhaps most important, Gustavus students have had a chance to be part of a faith community as they journey through some of their most formative years. In 25 years, new partnerships, new programs, and new relationships have been created, as blessings to both congregations and the College.

All this connecting takes intentionality, imagination, and dedicated hearts, hands, and feet! The staff in Church Relations and the Director for Church Relations serve as critical links in building and nurturing relationships between people and between congregations and the College. For this reason, the Association of Congregations has launched a new effort to endow the position of the Director for Church Relations. The endowment recognizes the value of this role, as a blessing to both the College and to congregations.

A donation to the Director for Church Relations Endowment Fund is a gift that lasts beyond a lifetime. Every Gift Counts—by putting our gifts together we can establish and grow the endowment, helping secure the future of Church Relations at Gustavus Adolphus College.

For those who contribute to an endowment, it’s a chance to affirm a value, in this context the value of the Church-College partnership and the value of engaging in conversations about faith as part of the liberal arts experience. One of the blessings of this endowment is the flexibility it offers for the next 25 years and beyond. In the past 25 years, Dennis Johnson, Craig Johnson, Jack Niemi, and Grady St. Dennis have been watchful and creative, always asking “what are the current opportunities and needs, hopes and dreams?” And, “how can this partnership be a blessing, in this time and place?” Giving a gift to the endowment is a chance to live out a current value and to give a future blessing. It is a gift to build relationships, now and in the future, and to reach out for new opportunities, dreams, hopes, and possibilities.

For more information on the Director for Church Relations Endowment Fund and how to make a gift please contact Grady St. Dennis as sdennis@gustavus.edu, 507-933-7661; or Jim Rothschilder at jrothsch@gustavus.edu, 952-686-8255.
Center for Servant Leadership,
Church Relations

507-933-7001 | Toll-free 800-726-6194 | gustavus.edu/churchrelations
Office Hours 8 a.m.–4:45 p.m. M–F (unavailable during Chapel 10-10:30 a.m.)

The Rev. Grady St. Dennis ’92
Director for Church Relations and College Chaplain
507-933-7661 | stdennis@gustavus.edu

Sara Masters
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Fax 507-933-6337

Confirmation Retreats Program
507-933-7023
confirmation-retreats@gustavus.edu

Gustavus Youth Outreach (GYO)
507-933-7585
youthoutreach@gustavus.edu

Adult Retreat Programs
507-933-7001
retreat-center@gustavus.edu

Partners Programs
507-933-7001
church-relations@gustavus.edu

BECOME A MEMBER!

Is your ELCA congregation not a member of the Association of Congregations but interested in joining? Contact the Center for Servant Leadership–Church Relations.

Office Hours
8 a.m.–4:45 p.m. M–F (unavailable during Chapel 10-10:30 a.m.)