

## Dean's Report to 2011 Southwest Conference Convention

As my third anniversary as dean approaches let me express again the privilege it is to serve in this capacity. Unfortunately, there is not space here to highlight all the wonderful ministry initiatives across our conference. You will remember our convention at All Saints Lutheran last November under the theme of World Missions. This year's convention will be hosted at Prince of Faith Lutheran Saturday, November 26<sup>th</sup> with guest speaker Dr. James Pope, family physician and long time chief of staff at Queen Elizabeth II Hospital, Grande Prairie. Dr. Pope will present on "Spiritual Care from a Physician's Point of View" with personal case studies and insights for pastoral counseling as connections between physical and spiritual health are explored. Please make every effort to attend, encourage your lay leaders as well and don't forget to bring a youth delegate too. You will be inspired, challenged and richly blessed!

Since my last report a number of our colleagues have experienced significant transitions. Rev. Don Hall passed away into the presence of the Lord on June 6<sup>th</sup>. Brenda Carstens, who served our conference long and well as treasurer, went home to eternal rest on July 1<sup>st</sup>. Incidentally, Don and Brenda were the same age, 59 years young. Despite this huge loss we are blessed by the memory of their faithful witness and the certain hope we share of eternal life. Brenda's passing caught our conference council off guard with no contingency plans in place to complete the bookkeeping for our August 31<sup>st</sup> yearend. Your patience and understanding is appreciated as we struggle to straighten out our conference finances. I apologize for the delay in remitting cheques to congregations represented at this past summer's national convention. A big thank you to Betty Pollock, office administrator at Emmanuel Lutheran, who has graciously agreed to serve as interim treasurer! Florence Wind was united in marriage to Barry Riddell in June and has recently joined the ranks of retired diaconal ministers having announced completion of interim ministry at Good Shepherd, High River this past summer. Pastor Stewart Miller completed his ministry at Hope Lutheran in June with acceptance of a call to Estevan, Saskatchewan. Our warmest welcome to Aaron Schnell ordained June 17<sup>th</sup> and installed September 11<sup>th</sup> as pastor at First Lutheran, a team ministry shared with Pastor Julianne Barlow. Abundant Life Lutheran, NW Calgary was officially organized as a new congregation and welcomed by our conference family with an evening celebration and unforgettable Chinese dinner at Advent Lutheran September 25<sup>th</sup>. Pastor Peter Chau is truly an inspiration to us all with his visionary leadership at Abundant Life. Pastor Rod McLeish took early retirement in October completing his ministry at Holy Cross, Okotoks. Preliminary plans are in progress for a co-operative ministry between Holy Cross and Good Shepherd, High River. And during these uncertain times let's remain prayerful as faithful shepherds and lay leaders concerned for the future of our church following the decisions taken at our ELCIC National Convention in July relative to the Social Statement of Human Sexuality.

An enthusiastic planning committee is having tremendous fun as our SW conference prepares to host Synod Convention at the Augustana Campus, U of A, Camrose in May 2012. Pastor Bart Eriksson and several other pastors oversee monthly Lutheran Youth events across the city and it's gratifying to see how well attended these gatherings are as keen, energetic youth meet to grow in faith and make new friends. Our rostered and other professional workers continue to meet each month for breakfast, worship, study and mutual support. In recent months, however, our commitment to these gatherings has often been disappointing. This concerns me greatly and I would simply encourage us all to make this a priority because we really need each other and the mutual conversation and consolation these gatherings provide. I have enjoyed serving together with the fine members of our conference council: Terrie Coombs, Laura Holukoff, Donna Christensen and Rick Quast. Rick and Donna's resignations for personal reasons and Brenda's passing require our convention to elect a number of new members to fill these council vacancies. Thank you for your support and partnership in living and proclaiming the good news of our Lord Jesus. To God alone be glory.

Respectfully submitted,  
*Dennis Aicken, Dean*