

Covenant Cluster Network Consultation
February 26-28, 2009
Casting the Net

The notes that follow are assembled from participant notes and small group reports. While these notes have no official status, they are intended to present highlights, themes and initiatives rising out of the consultation.

More than 45 people from through the mid-section of the United States, the area encompassed by the Covenant Cluster, gathered at the Marillac Center for the fourth annual consultation of the Covenant Cluster Network.

Beth Lewis immediately called consultation participants into an overview of networking and the development of network. Her presentation is available on the Covenant Cluster Network website at www.covenantcluster.net.

Tom Ludwig presented the names of those who have been nominated to serve as the first elected members of the Steering Committee of the Covenant Cluster Network:

Doug Liston representing synodical learning programs

Janice Kibler representing synods

Dwight DuBois representing synod/college programming

Fred Fritz representing campus ministry

Chip Bouzard representing colleges

Marilyn Smith, representing coordinators for ministry leadership

Ashley Updegraff, a student at the University of Iowa

A person, yet to be named, representing the Covenant Cluster Board

These persons were unanimously elected by acclamation.

Ray Pickett made a presentation on one model of reading the text, specifically using an analysis of the world behind the text, the world of the text and the world in front of the text. His PowerPoint presentation is also at www.covenantcluster.net.

On Thursday evening, **Diane Hymans** and **Tom Ludwig** took next steps in opening up some of the pedagogical issues related to teaching and learning, and the advances in understanding of brain function related to memory and learning. These presentations are also available on the website

On Friday morning, **Dick Bruesehoff** and **Diane Hymans** made presentations on effective teaching and learning methods for young adults and adults in non-degree settings. Go to the website for Dick Bruesehoff's PowerPoint presentation and a link to the primary document which Diane Hymans used in her presentation.

Ray Pickett led the group in a rich study of Luke 5:1-11. His key questions are part the presentation he began on Thursday afternoon.

Diane Jacobson gave an update on the work of the Book of Faith Initiative. She talked about the strong response of many individuals and congregations, the resistance that is being encountered in some areas to connect the creative Bible study work they are doing with Book of Faith (and therefore sharing what they are doing with the whole ELCA), the various ways in which people are engaging (some with a book, and some with electronic communication) and the strength there is when people teach and learn across generational lines. The challenges that continue to be addressed is how to respond to this initiative not as a program but as an invitation to ask how we, where ever we live, can live into the vision of the Book of Faith Initiative. The idea of networking is helping to create a vision of individuals and groups working together in new and productive ways. The continuing invitation is to become part of the initiative at www.bookoffaith.org and <http://bookoffaith.ning.com/>. The development of a Book of Faith Initiative network is requiring new leadership skills in everyone. But it finally about the relationships between people who are committed to engaging the primary language of faith. The challenges for all of us are to equip more and more people to be the teachers of the Bible, particularly in the seminary classroom. The second challenge is how we market, actually creating the desire to engage the Bible.

The whole group, first in small groups and then as a large group, talked about the personal and organizational interested that they brought to the consultation and the kinds of network they want and need in order to do their theological education work more effectively.

There was a time for sharing of helpful resources. The following websites were highlighted

<http://www.sermonspice.com/>

<http://www.allpastors.com/>

<http://www.workingpreacher.org/>

<http://www.augustana.edu/>

<http://www.covenantcluster.net/>

<http://www.elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Education/Life-Long-Learning/SELECT.asp>

<http://westernmission.ning.com/>

<http://www.feautor.org/en>

http://www.deeperstudy.com/link/paul_journeys_index.html

http://www.deeperstudy.com/link/paul_journeys_index.html

<http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/>

<http://www.biblemap.org/events/Pauls2ndJourney/>

The Covenant Cluster Board has instructed the deans of the three seminaries to appoint a young, tech-savvy faculty member from each of the seminaries to serve on the Steering Committee.

Duane Larson brought an update from the Covenant Cluster Seminaries and the cluster board. He talked first about the momentum that has already been building in the cluster network during these past four years. He also spoke about the cluster board's commitment to appoint younger, entrepreneurial faculty members from each of the seminaries to the Network Steering Committee. The collaborations among partners in the network of theological education providers are growing, and the seminaries are committed to the networks's continuing growth and development.

The boards of the three seminaries will be meeting together in November to explore emerging and possible collaborations.

Saturday Affinity Group reports

Synod staff/synod program group

- How does the Covenant Cluster Network support our work with leaders of congregations?
 1. offers exposure to new resources
 2. offers new ideas and perspective e.g. to coordinate lay school schedules and programming, also the need to get synod staffs together just to network
 3. offers a place to discuss lay theological education to build up our synod programs and reflect on Conference of Bishops decisions--but need more lay school of theology directors here

Who sets the goals? Does this network set goals or does it support synod goals?

- Relationships are the most important thing here, i.e. the networking. What would make the Network more effective?
 1. Do we need to work harder to get people here, e.g. in their respective areas. Do we need to have a larger site?
 2. Do we need to see this as a turn around event for synod leaders to then take back to their synod to replicate there?
 3. Does this need to be replicated in regions, e.g. region 6, with more participation by synod staffs, colleges, lay school directors involved?
 4. Is this just a glorified resource fair?
 5. Have affinity group meetings here, but also speed dating in mixed groups or on one in ones
 - What do we need?
 1. We need a critical mass, wider participation
 2. We need buy in by the bishops
 3. We need stated objectives

Book of Faith Ideas for Covenant Cluster Network

- Book of Faith: 5 inaugural years
- Recommend a special issue of The Lutheran telling stories about Book of Faith...maybe in the same month as Lutheran Women Today and Lutheran Partners
- Synodical workshops on “how to lead a Bible study for people who haven’t been to seminary/or who aren’t experts/or who haven’t read much Bible yourselves.”
- Bible for young adults...more tied to contemporary culture...movies, music, etc.
- HollywoodJesus.com website
- The world’s most dangerous Bible Study (Princeton?)
<http://www.ptsem.edu/iym/cow/wmdbs/index.php>
- Vocation & Education unit send out news re: Jubilee to all ELCA colleges, seminaries, outdoor ministries, etc.
- *Everybody Loves Raymond* and theology....Chip Bouzard
- Kay Richter’s Read through the Bible in one year on ning site
- Greg Kaufmann: What’s your favorite Bible verse? And flash them on PowerPoint slides at a gathering such as Synod Assembly.

- Stickers in Spark Bible allude back to the Swedish marking method
- Diane Jacobson: Luther Seminary giveaway Bibles stories
- Diane Jacobson: Montana 3 godmothers highlighting Bible for 3 years prior to confirmation...then gave to the goddaughter with her own marker
- Invite 10 lapsed members and 10 active members to talk about church for a couple of hours...watch what happens
- Darlene's story about a Mom in Wisconsin who leaves Bible open on kitchen counter and each day the family spends 10 to 15 minutes talking about favorite verse from that open page. Hockey boys stopped by after morning practice for breakfast and started talking about it. Now, even though her daughters are off at college, these 4 or 5 high school boys still want to stop by on Mondays for breakfast and Bible talk

Training of lay Bible study leaders

- At synod assembly workshops
- At lay schools for alumni
- Have a special day
- Publish a list of resource persons who could be available for training.

Role of other agencies

- College and campus ministries
- Alumni organizations of Lutheran colleges
- Training events could be shared
- Can Scripture have a bigger role in things that are already going on in colleges (e.g. mission trips). Advertise this among colleges and universities, campus pastors

Book of Faith Advocates

- Model, encourage them to attend events like the Cluster Network event
- Diane J. to e-mail the Advocates, encouraging them to attend network type events

Seminaries, colleges to be encouraged to become "official" Book of Faith institutions

How does the Cluster Network resource Book of Faith into homes and families.

National Youth Gathering - Ramona to work out a presence in the Interaction Center for Book of Faith

Book of Faith with companion synods

Missional Leadership and Lifelong Learning Group

On Saturday we talked somewhat briefly about how the CCC could help with developing Missional Leadership. There were two brief observations. One was that if the Covenant Cluster Consultation schedules its themes around something like, "Implementing _____ in the institutions and organizations of the Cluster," then missional leadership could be one of the items put in the blank. The group also suggested filling in the blank with 'prayer' after we've given 'Book of Faith' its time.

Cluster Teacher Network

The Cluster Teacher Network gathering will take place July 12-16, 2009, at the University of St. Mary in Mundelein, Illinois. The steering committee has been focusing on the nature of the teaching and learning that they are hoping will take place during the gathering and are now in the process of communicating this vision to the select faculty persons from the Covenant Cluster seminaries who will be resource people at the gathering.

Where do we go from here?

The consensus is to meet again in 2010. February 11-13 is available at Merrilac, but the Steering Committee is authorized to explore other dates and other places. Later in the month of February 2010 would be easier because it is after Ash Wednesday.

- Great appreciation was expressed for the Bible Study and for a focus on teaching and learning.
- Focus on goals/purposes
- Need for more funding to include young adults
- In 2010, include a review of the Cluster Teacher Network gathering
- Incorporating “praying/prayer in the congregation” more fully into the consultation
- Robin McCullough-Bade, Church of our Savior in Baton Rouge was recommended as a presenter.
- Give some focus to enhancing the collaboration between partners in the Covenant Cluster Network around delivery of lifelong learning. This would be of immediate and interest to synodical bishops.
- What is the impact of the transitions/crises that are facing our various institutions? What does this mean for us individually and institutionally? How do we live and act from a sense of hope.
- Rather than just talking about the Bible and prayer, continue to invite those who can lead us in Bible Study and Prayer
- The desire was expressed for more time for networking