A call *continued from page C*

Surrendering to God's plans

The following comments are from **Amanda Rasner,** who started as the new director of Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp in Crystal Falls in January. She reflected on change as she begins her new work at Fortune Lake.

Don't be afraid of change. Everybody's got to let go of something. Don't be afraid of change. Take my hand, let go of your plans (Lukas Nelson & Promise of the Real).

The lyrics from this recent song have been my mantra for the past six months. The first time I heard them, it felt as if God were singing them directly to my heart.

I had been contemplating major change in my profession, in where my family lives and worships and in my typical role as wife and mother. Many questions remained. Where was the Spirit leading? If called, could I take the leap? What would that mean for my children, my husband? How would we manage without the regular connection to the community we had come to call home?

And yet, *and yet,* it was as if God was saying, "Take my hand, let go of your plans." So I did. Through months of prayer and honest conversations, I said "yes!" with confidence to my new call as the director of Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp. By the time of this insert's publication, my family will be alongside me, trusting God to take care of the details as we do the preparatory work.

So it is with camping ministry—with all of life, really. When we offer up the reins, when we let go of our plans and surrender to God's, then true beauty shines through. Outdoor ministry has changed a great deal since I was a camper in the 1980s. Rules and regulations are far more stringent, all in the name of protecting our precious resource—children. Whereas youth camps were bursting at the seams then, family and intergenerational programming is now our fastest-growing options. Platform tents have been replaced with treehouses, and our Vagland bathrooms (with running water!) will get a much-needed face-lift before summer.

Amanda Rasner

As followers of Christ and stewards of Fortune Lake, we are called to embrace the change that the Spirit ushers in. I look forward to the next chapter of discerning and implementing those changes with you, even as we celebrate the traditions and stories of our rich history in this place of grace. ⅃

Synod calendar

April
7: Marked! Event, Ascension Lutheran Church, Minocqua, Wis., 4-7 p.m.

May
5: Fortune Lake Camp Annual Meeting, Crystal Falls, Mich., 2:30-6 p.m.
13: Senior Day, Fortune Lake Lutheran Camp, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
16-18: Synod Assembly, Bay College and Bethany Lutheran Church, Escanaba, Mich.

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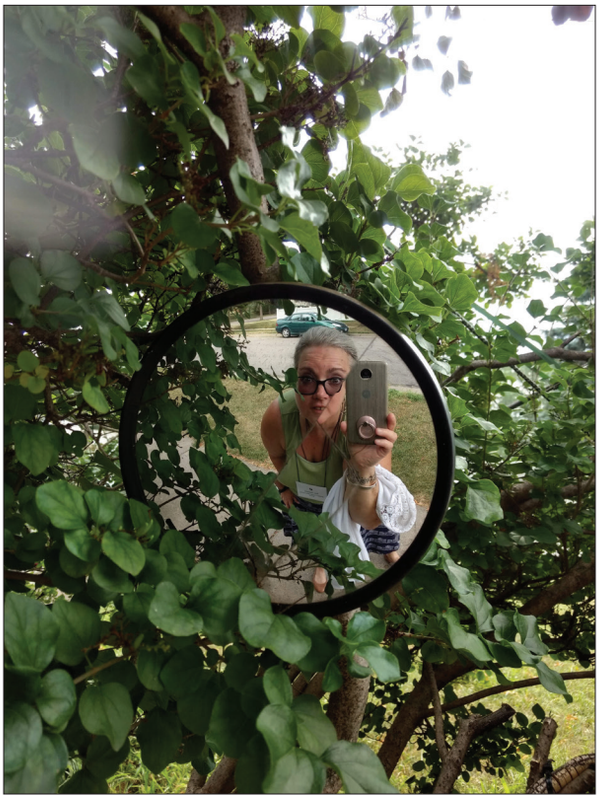
Changing world, changing church:

A call to faithfulness

Bob Dylan wrote a song, "The Times They are A-Changin'." Change is a constant in the world we live in. Church leaders are having to adjust, adapt and change at a pretty rapid pace. In many ways, we are in uncharted territory. Todd Bolsinger wrote a book with a curious title, *Canoeing the Mountains*, where he reflects on the Lewis and Clark Expedition's goal to find a path to the Northwest. What started out as a river voyage would eventually face a new challenge: mountains. The crew was basically trained for river navigation, but they had to adjust to the unchartered mountains before them.

"Canoeing the mountains" feels a lot like what's going on in Christendom today. Our faith declares that God is still God. God has got the future. Christ is still Lord. God's grace changes everything.



See page B for the Rev. Ann Gonyea's reflection on change and God's faithfulness.

Jim Duehring

God's Spirit is on the move. But the questions remain: What is God up to now? What is God asking us to join in with? What structural changes are warranted? What changes of perspective are called for?

Some of our synod pastors have been contemplating these matters in training at Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minn., with professors Dwight Zscheile and Michael Binder. These trainings have been called: "Faithful Innovations." A $75,000 grant from the Siebert Foundation is enabling the six synods of Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to participate and offer this in their respective territories.

Zscheile, author of *The Agile Church*, will be the keynote speaker at the Northern Great Lakes Synod Assembly in Escanaba, May 16-18. He will also present a workshop that will be open to the general public on Saturday, May 18.

The Northern Great Lakes Synod invites congregational lay leaders, pastors, deacons and licensed lay leaders to take a journey as we reimagine the church in light of today's changing culture. This is a Spirit-led journey in which we are invited to engage the spiritual practices of listening, discerning, experimenting and reflecting.

A congregation commits four to seven laypeople to attend trainings and become part of its "Guiding Team." There will be three training events (June 29, Sept. 7 and Nov. 9) along with monthly coaching for laity and pastors. The pastor of the congregation also attends the trainings.

Continued on page B

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A call *continued from page A*

The key features of Faithful Innovations are:

- Dwelling in the word.
- Tracing God's movement in our lives and neighborhoods.
- Action learning experiments.
- Intentional reflection.

More details about Faithful Innovations will be forthcoming. Check the synod website (**nglsynod.org**) and watch for communications from the synod office, including "E-Notes" and "Notes & Quotes."

I asked a few leaders in our synod to reflect on change and God's faithfulness. I thank the Revs. Ann Gonyea, Keith Kolstad and Matt Lamb, and Amanda Rasner, the new Fortune Lake Camp director, for their contributions to this synod insert.

May we be found to be resilient, innovative and faithful people during times of change.

The Rev. Jim Duehring
Assistant to the bishop
and director for evangelical mission

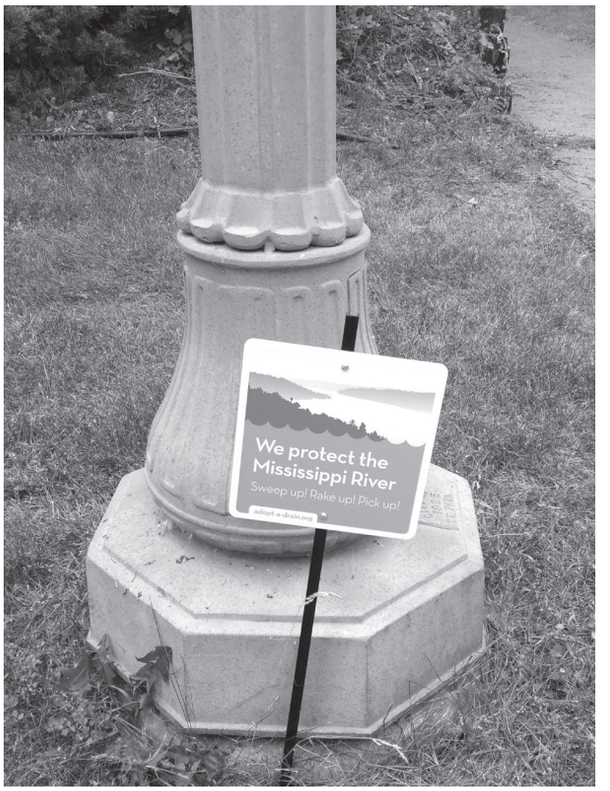
Time to wonder

The following comments are from **the Rev. Ann Gonyea,** pastor of Eden Lutheran Church, Munising, Mich. She is one of the four pastors from the Northern Great Lakes Synod trained at Luther Seminary in Faithful Innovations.

I am a wonderer by nature. I wonder at the stories of others. I wonder what it is like to live in other places. I wonder at the way God created me—the interests and abilities that seem as much a part of me as my eye color and identity as a child of God.

The Faithful Innovation learning the Northern Great Lakes Synod has taken part in over the last year is a good fit for wonderers. Part of the "process" the synod team has been learning is to go outside some of our usual daily patterns to wonder what God might be up to in people, places of business, neighborhoods, organizations, etc. For congregations this can be an eye-opening experience.

Our first "Faithful Innovation" exercise—a neighborhood walk with some friends—provided a simple yet fruitful way of beginning to take that wondering out of the safety of our familiar surroundings and into the world. Our team went on one of these walks during our training in St. Paul, Minn., in August. We had no specific agenda except to be observant, take some pictures and try to discover where God was at work.



Above is one picture I took in a neighborhood near our training location. I have no idea if the people who lived in the house where this sign was planted are part of a faith community or not, but I could clearly see that God was working through them for the sake of creation. Where but the very headwaters of the mighty Mississippi River is this kind of example more influential and important? So I noted this truth and thanked God for the desire these people feel to steward those waters as well. I sometimes think of them when, at Eden Lutheran Church in Munising, we offer our prayers for creation and those who protect it.

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God still gives visions

Keith Kolstad

The following comments are from **the Rev. Keith Kolstad**, pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, Marinette, Wis. He is one of the four pastors from the synod trained at Luther Seminary in Faithful Innovations.

During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9).

God still gives visions to God's people, the church, as to where God wants us to go within our communities. God is already active in those places before we even show up, as you'll see when you read on in this account from Acts. Faithful Lydia was already there. Notice, too, that the request was simply to come and help. There was no call for conversion or to establish a worship center. It was simply to come and proclaim the good news through help.

Where is God in your community and what is God busy doing there? Yes, it may not be obvious to us at first, but by praying together as a congregation, carefully listening to the voice of God, we can and will discern this activity of God. Careful listening can happen through faithful experiments as we seek out the Lydias in our community.

The church is undergoing significant transformation today as it has many times before in its history. God has never, and will never, leave the church to survive on its own. God is always present in, with and through the church, guiding us into new expressions of God's love for the world, blessing us with visions of where to find Lydia.

God is already at work

The following comments are from **the Rev. Matt Lamb,** pastor of St. James Lutheran Church, Rudyard, Mich. He is one of the four pastors from the synod trained at Luther Seminary in Faithful Innovations.

Recently I attended training for a new way of being church called Faithful Innovation Learning Community. When I agreed to attend this training, I wasn't optimistic that it would actually be new. I expected that I would find repackaged ideas that had been tried in the past. I was wrong.

Faithful Innovation Learning Community is, in my view, something new. What makes it new is its foundational premise that God is at work both in the church *and* beyond the church. I have been generally operating with the idea that we, the church, serve the world by "taking" God into the world through our stories and service. FILC extends that idea by looking at the world as a place where God is already at work, with or without the aid of the church. That perspective puts the church into the role of a learner, also known as a disciple.

Matt Lamb

In this role, we—the church—move into our neighborhoods and communities looking for the people through whom God is already working, and then seeing how we can learn from them and partner with them to do God's work. Rather than finding a need and marshalling resources and methods to address it, the church seeks to find people already at work and then joins them in it. Instead of being in the role of provider of goods and services, we take the role of partner.

Does this approach do away with our programs that currently serve people in need? No. Rather it adds to them, giving us a way to be church that can increase and deepen our relationship with our neighbors. This, in turn, allows us more opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ in new and deeper ways, and, just as important, grows us as disciples of Christ.

I'm grateful for this training.

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