

Issue 1  
January 2009

# Hope on the Prairie

## **HISTORY OF NDCC**

It began with a different perspective. It was actually under a pioneer organization of the ecumenical movement in ND, and was called the North Dakota Sunday School Association. Its first convention was held in 1890 in Grand Forks. As its purpose grew the association was reorganized into the Council of Christian Education in 1922. In 1944 the organization saw a vision beyond education, wanting to include all phases of Church life and so became the North Dakota Interchurch Council in 1944.

Once again seeing changing needs it became the North Dakota Council of Churches in 1959. With Dr. Oscar Olsen as executive secretary the ND Council of Churches saw itself expand into five areas of work: Christian Education, Christian Asocial Rela-

tions, Ecumenical Relations, Evangelism and Promotion, an ND Council of Church Women United.

In order to reach more Christian denominations, the Council of Churches dissolved in 1970 and restructured itself into the North Dakota Conference of Churches.

Under the guidance of the Rev. J. Winfred Stoerker, Exec. Secretary of the conference from 1971 until 1982, the Conference developed different outreach programs, again designed to help Church congregations and communities in ND to be strong witnesses to the Gospel in ND. Since 1982 the NDCC has continued its effort to be a support to local congregations of the Christian Church in various ways, and as needs indicate.

The Board of Directors, consisting of representatives of the member

constituents, meets 3 times a year. An executive committee is elected from the Board of Directors.

Current leadership is given elsewhere in this newsletter.

## **UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS**

JANUARY 19, 2009  
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST  
BISMARCK  
9:30 AM

MAY 18, 2009  
9:30 AM

SEPTEMBER 21, 2009  
9:30 AM

## Devils Lake

An inspiration from laity of 3 congregations in Devils Lake has blossomed into broad based "Church community" effort. The inspiration from members of Peace, Our Savior's and St. Olaf Lutheran centered on making available more resources to Dakota Prairie Community Action Agency. This agency serves people in a multi-county area around Devils Lake with the necessities of life: food, clothing, medical, some limited financial aid, etc.

Knowing that the Agency has more requests for help than resources available to help, the laity from the 3 congregations assembled a committee of concerned people from their congregations to develop a means of assisting the Agency. Meeting with an Agency representative it was learned that the biggest need was "cash on hand" funds to purchase items needed by individuals or families which are not in other donated stocks of food or clothing items.

The planning committee set the goal of holding a public spaghetti supper to raise funds, asking for freewill offering to expand the Agency's assistance efforts. Thrivent Financial for Lutherans is providing some matching funds.

At the planning committee meeting it was urged to share this plan with the local Ministerial Association and invite other Churches to participate in the fund raising effort.

The outcome of that contact with the Ministerial Association is that the 3 congregations in the original planning will host the spaghetti dinner, doing much of the "leg work" to organize the event, with the other Churches of the community recruiting volunteers to help with the actual dinner work, provide dessert bars, serving, clean-up, etc., to bring it all to fruition.

At the Ministerial Association meeting conversation went further, to the extend that the idea could be repeated in the near future (6 months to a year), with 2 or 3 different congregations hosting the next dinner and those now the hosts "pitching in" to make it happen.

Besides assisting a valuable community Agency in providing broader help to people in need, it is anticipated that the fellowship will deepen appreciation of each other as sisters and brothers in the body of Christ.



*"The North Dakota Conference of Churches gathers Christian faith traditions to further express our unity in Jesus Christ through prayer, dialogue and shared ministry."*

# FROM BEHIND THE SCENES

Dear Co-Workers in Christ's Vineyard:

Every organization, every congregation has behind the scenes workers who have goals and missions which they carry out without fanfare. Such has been the working of the North Dakota Conference of Churches, the ecumenical coming together of denominational leaders/representatives for the purpose of gathering "*Christian faith traditions to further express our unity in Jesus Christ through prayer, dialogue and shared ministry,*" as the mission statement of the NDCC declares.

Unfortunately, for too long the NDCC has been too much "behind the scenes," providing only occasional visions of the steady work

being done. This newsletter is our determination to bring the NDCC's work to the forefront for the benefit of all, *especially* the denominational representatives to the NDCC. It is our earnest hope that you will communicate with your representative to share ideas, ask questions and spur us on to address issues and concerns of the people of the Church/the Body of Christ in your communities and our State.

It is the Board's intent that this issue of the newsletter be the first of subsequent quarterly issues.

We hope you will find the summary of the history of what is now known as the **North Dakota Conference of Churches** helpful in

gaining perspective on our long-standing partnerships.

We hope the vignettes of interdenominational happenings in other communities will be helpful. We encourage you to share things happening in **your** community as a resource to others seeking ideas. They will be published in subsequent issues.

Please keep in touch.

Sincerely in Christ,  
(Rev.) Reuben Schnaidt  
NDCC Chr.

## Devils Lake:

For roughly a decade, now, the Church of the Advent Episcopal and the Presbyterian parish comprised of Devils Lake, Minnewaukon and Webster, have annually come together for a "Harvest Festival" dinner. Each parish takes turns in hosting the event. Typically the evening includes a devotional time centered in the Thanksgiving theme with a potluck Thanksgiving type meal "with all the trimmings." There is great fellowship and visiting. An offering is also always taken, with the entire offering designated for an outreach ministry, either local or non-local.

## Our Members:

American Baptist Churches of the Dakotas • Church of Brethren, Mon-Dak Area • Church of God (Anderson) • Episcopal Diocese of ND • Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Eastern ND Synod, Western ND Synod • Moravian Church in America, Northern Province • Presbyterian Church, USA, Presbytery of the Northern Plains • Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) • Roman Catholic Church, Bismarck Diocese, Fargo Diocese • United Church of Christ, Northern Plains Conference • United Methodist Church, Dakotas Conference.