

Message from the Conference Minister

Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

Thursday, March 25 is this year's "Day on the Hill," the annual event sponsored by the Joint Religious Legislative Coalition (JRLC). The Minnesota Conference United Church of Christ is a sponsor of this event and is a partner through its membership in the Minnesota Council of Churches. If you are not yet registered and your schedule will permit, I encourage you to sign up and to make plans to visit with your legislators. You can do this at www.jrlc.org. It is always gratifying to see a strong UCC representation!

You may be interested to know that last Thursday, March 11, the six Minnesota bishops of the Evangelical Lutheran Church traveled together to the Capitol and met with most of the 47 Lutheran legislators serving in the state House and Senate and then with the leadership of both houses and the governor's chief of staff. Their purpose was to communicate support for the important work being done and ***to express their hope that the values that arise from our faith traditions might inform decisions that serve the common good in Minnesota.*** These bishops represent 1,145 congregations and more than 800,000 members in the state.

Following their visit, they circulated a pastoral letter in which they wrote: "As Lutheran Christians, we have a place in the public arena ... we aspire to be thoughtful citizens, holding our public leaders accountable for shaping public policy in a way that serves the neighbor, seeks a just society and cares especially for the poor, the vulnerable, and the marginalized." In addition, the bishops invited Lutheran congregations across the state to "A Call to Prayer, Conversation, and Action" on Sunday, April 18. On that day Lutherans will hold up elected leaders in personal and public prayer, and throughout the following week they will engage together in discussions about decisions under consideration by government leaders. Copies of the pastoral letter as well as the discussion guide developed by the bishops for congregational deliberation can be found at www.spas.elca.org.

Many Christians were distressed by the recent statement of talk show host, Glen Beck, that people should "run as fast as they can" and leave any church that mentions "social or economic justice." In her Huffington Post response, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/peg-chemberlin/christians-run-as-fast-as_b_495166.html, Rev. Peg Chemberlin, Executive Director of the Minnesota Council of Churches and President of the National Council of Churches rightly asserts: "Regardless of where one stands along the theological Christian spectrum, ***one cannot claim to be following the teachings of Scripture while also saying that Jesus and the prophets cared nothing for economic justice and that a discussion of such principles has no place in the Church.***" She continues: "As Christians seeking to live faithfully in the world, we must never find ourselves in a position where we are asking, 'How can I make the Gospel fit my political view?' Rather, we must let ourselves be constantly challenged and formed, always seeking to align our view of the public good and our political stances with our understanding of the call of Christ."

The Lutheran bishops rightly call us to align our view of the public good and our political stances with our understanding of the call of Christ. Day on the Hill provides a vital opportunity to express our convictions, to offer our encouragement and support, and to hold accountable our elected leaders. I hope to see YOU at River Centre on March 25!

Rev. Dr. Karen Smith Sellers