

Covenant Cluster Consultation  
“Weaving the Network”  
February 21-23, 2008

*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.*

**Thursday, February 21, 2008**

Co-chairs of the planning team, Tom Ludwig and Greg Kaufmann welcomed the more than 50 persons gathered at the Marillac Center in Leavenworth, KS, for the third Covenant Cluster Consultation. They introduced the other members of the 2008 planning team: Ramona Bouzard, Dick Bruesehoff, Tobi Johannsen, Don Just, Marcus Pera Michael Shelley, and Marianne Wilkinson.

Update on Seminary Programs

**Don Huber**, Dean at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, and **Kathleen Billman**, Dean at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, reported on the cooperative work of the three cluster seminaries. These included the recommendation that all of the ELCA seminaries develop an approach to distance education, and seminaries developed specific aspects of the curriculum. The three deans have proposed the following five points for future work among the cluster seminaries

- Coordinating existing dynamic programs of the cluster such as the care for creation program
- Coordinating Masters Degree programming
- Coordinating TEEM curriculum and course offerings
- Developing cluster J-Term, Immersions and Summer offerings
- Coordinating cluster participation in the ELCA Missional Leadership Initiative

Limitations include energy and funding for these kinds of collaborative efforts.

The Deans have established opportunities for regular contact realizing that such cooperation takes time to develop and requires building cordial, collegial, working relationships. This will require continuing attention as the seminaries enter a period of significant transitions in the Deans' offices in 2009.

Update on Lilly Grant Proposal

**Mark Ramseth**, President at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, provided some background on the proposed cluster grant request to the Lilly Endowment. In the first two years of the cluster consultation, there has been significant and growing interest in growing as a network of theological education providers. He raised three questions about the discernment presently going on in the cluster:

- What key places are turning points for discernment in the lives of Lutherans
- What entities and institutions are positioned to be responsive to those place and situations where people are in these key places of discernment

- Who in the world is out there to collaborate with in order to be attentive to these people in these key places.

The three presidents have initiated a conversation with Lilly about these ideas. Lilly is concerned about pastoral excellence in congregations. It will be important for this cluster to make the connections between these important questions raised in the Covenant Cluster and the priorities of the Lilly Endowment. The primary concern is a vision that will focus theological education in Covenant Cluster.

### Building a Network

**Bob Bacher** led the group in exploration of networks and network-building. In response to the question “What holds networks together?” he listed the following:

- Unifying purpose
- Independent Members
- Voluntary links
- Multiple leaders
- Interdependent levels

### Small Group Discussions on Network Building

Bob Bacher and Dick Bruesehoff organized a discussion on the following issues:

1. What makes you hopeful and what concerns you about “network building” as a key role of the Covenant Cluster?
2. What have you learned as a result of your experience with network(s)?
3. What successful networks do you know? What makes them successful?
4. Who do you know with good facilitation skills? What do they do that is effective?
5. What do you think your constituents think about the idea of networks?
6. What would better equip you to nurture networks? What can the Covenant Cluster do to nurture networks?

(Note: Reports from the small groups are included in an appendix to these notes.)

### Book of Faith

**Diane Jacobson** reported on the Book of Faith Initiative.

The purposes include

- Experiencing more fully and more frequently the power of the Word
- Making a commitment to join the conversation
- Increasing Bible literacy and fluency
- Deepening understanding of Lutheran approaches to Scripture
- Renewing and enlivening the whole church

Concrete goals of the initiative

- That 75% of congregations and institution of the ELCA committee to the initiative

- That 15,000 lay and rostered leaders are trained to do lead fruitful bible study
- That we dramatically increase the number of people participating regular engagement with the Bible
- To make it work locally
- To engender a conversation which is deep and broad

Resources will include

- Book of Faith Web sites: [www.elca.org/bookoffaith](http://www.elca.org/bookoffaith) and [www.augsburgfortress.org/bookoffaith](http://www.augsburgfortress.org/bookoffaith)
- *Opening the Book of Faith: Lutheran Insights for Bible Study* which will include a downloadable study guide and assessment tools
- *Introduction to the Bible* course in Fall 2008
- *Lutheran Study Bible* in Spring 2009
- New Adult Bible studies in Spring 2009
- More resources to come in the future

Training Events

- Synod Advocate/Leadership Training in August 2008 for an overview, planning and training
- Synodical Leadership Teams who plan for local synodical events
- Synodical Book of Faith Leadership Training Events at which people become comfortable and competent Bible Study leaders, become familiar with adult bible study methods and build up groups with common teaching interests.

Worship – Evening Prayer led by Lynn Schudy-Ziese and Janice Kibler

Fellowship and Hospitality – sponsored by Robert Haak, Augustana College

**Friday, February 22, 2008**

Worship – Morning Prayer, led by Jean DeVoll-Donaldson, Doug Liston, and Janice Kibler

Effective Networks

**Bob Bacher** continued his presentation on networks and networking, this time focusing on sorting and separating. He presented Ten Guiding Statements for networks that are the precursors to action

1. Attend to Purpose
2. Define Membership
3. Honor Independence
4. Communicate
5. Form Rules, Roles Identity
6. Gather Support from the Larger Environment
7. Develop Process and Structure Apace
8. Place Key Processes Online
9. Establish a Testing Process

## 10. Provide Network Leadership

### Small Group Discussions on the Critical Next Steps

Bob Bacher and Dick Brueshoff organized a discussion on the following issues:

1. What are the most important next steps for the Covenant Cluster Network?
2. In addition to the CATS program and the possible Lilly Grant Proposal, what other projects should the Covenant Cluster Network be working on?

(Note: Reports from the small groups are included in an appendix to these notes.)

### Sharing Resources and Seeking Resources: Brief Individual Reports

**What theological education resources can you offer to the network? What resources are you seeking from the network?**

- Faith and Wisdom, searchable database of learning opportunities, [www.faithandwisdom.org](http://www.faithandwisdom.org)
- Wartburg Theological Seminary has developed a TEEM curriculum that now has 40-50 ELCA TEEM candidates enrolled. They are developing a TEEM handbook and materials, including DVD, to help orient/train TEEM pastor-mentors
- Lutheran House of Studies in Central States Synod is looking for standards, course requirements and course syllabi for Synodically Authorized Ministries certification
- Wartburg Theological Seminary is home to the Center for Theology and Land, the Center for Global Theologies and the Center for Youth Ministry.
- Lynn Schudy Ziese is interested in conversation about a Lay Ministry Academy/School that is grounded in assumptions, values, and worldview of the Latino/a community.
- Lutheran Seminary Program in the Southwest is offering Language and Cultural Immersions programs (4 week intensive in Austin in Summer; 3 week intensive in Cuernavaca during J-term), TEEM with Spanish learning groups, and lecture/workshop resources for cross-cultural issues and immigration (Dr. Javier Alanis and Dr. Eliseo Perez)
- Stewardship Education at Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago: several endowments to offer stewardship education for students as well as lay/rostered leaders. Currently providing a variety of experiences for LSTC MDiv and MA students. Have begun offering workshops for lay and rostered leaders in greater Chicagoland area. In the future, make resources and programs available throughout the Covenant Cluster.
- LSTC Center for Christian-Muslim Engagement for Peace and Justice offers themselves as resources for understanding Islam and relating to our Muslim neighbors
- The three Covenant Cluster seminary libraries could collaborate as a significant theological resource on the cluster website. This would be led by Ray Olson (TLS), Susan Ebertz (WTS) and Christine Wenderoth (LSTC) with the cluster planning committee. The libraries and their collections could also be raised up more pointedly on the ELCA website under Theological Resources with synods, lay centers, colleges, etc.
- [www.augustana.edu/vocation](http://www.augustana.edu/vocation) is the website for The Augustana College Center for Vocational Reflection

- The Nebraska synod has resources to share in their lay ministry program (PMA) and project IDEA. They are seeking resources to instruct lay students for different cultures and languages (for example, Sudanese).
- The Regional Coordinators for Ministry Leadership, Carl Richard Evenson in Region 5 and Marilyn Smith in Region 6, are available to assist conversations, networks and work groups to communicate with bishops and other churchwide partners.  
[Carl.Evenson@ecunet.org](mailto:Carl.Evenson@ecunet.org) and [Marilyn.Smith@ecunet.org](mailto:Marilyn.Smith@ecunet.org)
- Wartburg College has speakers and short-term teachers in Bible, ethics, church history, race and racism, Luther, the Middle East (history and current events), faith formation for youth.

### Extending the Network: Brainstorming Session

#### **Who else should be here?**

Melanchthon Institute

Lutheran Colleges and Universities in the 24 synods of the Cluster

Staff and volunteers in the 24 synods

Lutheran faculty at non-Lutheran colleges and seminaries

Camps/outdoor ministries

Large congregations

Young adults

LACE

LSA

LOGA

ELEA

Teaching Theologians from various ethnic communities.

#### **More Covenant Cluster Network Resources**

- Marcus Pera, Fred Fritz, and Mike Girlinghouse made a presentation on campus ministry. They are providers of learning resources. Many campus ministry staff are also professors themselves and can be resources for lifelong learning.
- Larry Clark reported on the Lutheran Theological Center Atlanta. It offers a CPE experience, and J-Term experience, and a full year of academic work in Atlanta at ITC, Columbia, or Candler.
- Bob Haak reported on the Augustana College Center for Vocational Reflection and the various ELCA schools who received vocations grants from the Lilly Endowment. These schools are talking to 18-22 year-olds all day every day about discernment of vocation. They are also talking with those from many denominational backgrounds and those who have no church connection.
- Doug Liston talked about the *diakonia* program which is now operating in seven synods throughout the ELCA. It is a non-degree lay education program. More information about the program is at [www.mtselca.org/diakonia/index.html](http://www.mtselca.org/diakonia/index.html).
- Scott Tunseth reported on the work of Augsburg Fortress Publishers, [www.augsburgfortress.org](http://www.augsburgfortress.org), which produces resources for leaders and for the academy as the publishing ministry of the ELCA. The newest Fortress catalogue also contains textbook information that would be useful to leaders of lay schools.

- Dwight DuBois talked about the Center for Renewal at Grandview College, [www.renewingchurch.org](http://www.renewingchurch.org). He works primarily with congregations of the Southeastern Iowa Synod. The task is to provide resources for congregations in the renewal process and for individuals who are seeking to grow in faith. They are also working in partnership with the Alban Institute on a new program for congregational leaders.
- Jodi Hanson reported on the work of Fisher's Net Select. Greg Kaufmann is the director of The Fisher's Net, [www.fishersnet.net](http://www.fishersnet.net). Skip Cornett is the director of Select Multimedia Resources, [www.selectlearning.org](http://www.selectlearning.org). Jodi Hanson is the director of online courses for Fisher's Net Select, [www.fishersnetselect.org](http://www.fishersnetselect.org).

### **Reports from Western Mission Cluster and Eastern Cluster**

Jodi Hanson reported on the work of the Western Mission Cluster and the Western Mission Network. Reports from the ten annual consultations, including themes, are at [www.luthersem.edu/wmcluster/](http://www.luthersem.edu/wmcluster/). Planning for the annual WMN consultation is done by a broadly constituted Coordinating Committee.

Bob Bacher reported on the development of the Eastern Cluster. The Cluster website is at [www.easterncluster.org](http://www.easterncluster.org). This cluster incorporated as one of its first actions, and the website serves primarily as a work site for the cluster board.

Worship – Evening Eucharist led by Judy Gifford, Don Huber, and Janice Kibler

Fellowship and Hospitality – sponsored by Fisher's Net Select

### **Saturday, February 23, 2008**

Worship – Morning Responsive Prayer led by Marilyn Smith and Janice Kibler

Working Groups Session: The Network in Action

- **CATS proposal:**  
A series of gatherings of teachers in the various disciplines of theological education (starting with Bible to link it with Book of Faith) aimed at raising up excellence of pastoral ministry in congregations by
  - Building relationships among teachers
  - Exploring what is going on in the discipline
  - Exploring what is going on in teaching and learning
  - Exploring the ministry issues that are involved with defining competencies for courses
  - Having a piece in the Lilly Grant (drawn up by this group)

Members of the working group who will help draft a proposal include Marianne Wilkinson, Greg Kaufmann, Paul Baglyos, and Kadi Billman.

Others who were part of the Saturday morning working group include: Jean Devoll-Donaldson Lynn Schudy Ziess, Michael Shelley, Michael Girlinghouse, Dick Bruesehoff, Marilyn Smith.

- **Lilly Grant Proposal:** Mark Ramseth reported that there will be a group convened to seek a planning grant from the Lilly Endowment. The stated purpose of the grant is to

bolster excellence in congregations by encouraging and supporting excellence in the pastoral leaders of congregations. He invited people from the various working groups to send the ideas to him at [mramseth@trinitylutheranseminary.edu](mailto:mramseth@trinitylutheranseminary.edu)

- **Book of Faith:** That the synods assemblies name BoF Advocates in 2008 and adopt the resolution prepared by the work group, participate in the August 15-16, 2008, Advocate training and preparation, engage in development of the Synod Advocate planning in October 2008, that training events be held Spring 2009 through December 2010.

Diane Jacobson clarified the role of Advocate in the Book of Faith Initiative and explained the resources and training that would be provided. Scott provided the following time line:

- Advocates to be named by 2008 Synod Assemblies
- August 15-16 – Advocate Training
- October 2008 – Advocate initial plan (partners/events)
- Spring 2009-December 2010 Training Event – “Book of Faith Education Events”
- Beyond?

Goals:

- For Synods to become “Book of Faith” Synods
- For 75% of congregations to become “Book of Faith” congregations
- 15,000 leaders trained (5,000 rostered and 10,000 lay)

Congregations and Synods should draw up a covenant to express their commitment to the “Book of Faith” initiative. Some members of the group crafted a model resolution that can be adapted by Synods at the Synod Assemblies (sent under separate cover). The resolution celebrates what Bible study is already being done.

The group emphasized the importance of lifting up existing programs and resources in the synods and the Covenant Cluster. The Covenant Cluster web site could include a comprehensive list of all the seminaries, colleges, lay schools, campus ministries, etc.

The content for the training of the Advocates is undetermined. However, a template and methodology will be provided in the Augsburg Fortress materials and resources will be posted on a web site. Part of the work of the Covenant Cluster is use available theological education resources, including people, to help synods think about formation, pedagogy, mission, promotion, etc. Jim Bailey and Ray Pickett will enlist the help of Norma Everist and Diane Hymans and draft a working paper on formation and pedagogy.

The group also discussed the possibility of providing different models and multiple pathways for Bible study. So in addition to a foundational and perhaps intermediate tracks there might be a variety of other approaches people could explore and use. For example, there could be an emphasis on cross-cultural readings, mission, different size congregations, practice, etc.

A Lily Grant could be used to do a Cluster gathering of Advocates.

- **Network website:** Cluster Network website will be hosted on the FNS server. Tim Fehr has begun a redesign of the website and will serve as web master. Members of the workgroup included Tim Fehr, Skip Cornett, Ray Olson, Fred Fritz, and Tom Ludwig.

- **Network Structure Committee:** At the meeting next year, we propose that the planning committee propose an agenda to accomplish:
  1. Purpose – Keep the mission statement as it stands for another year.
  2. Creation of Covenant Theological Education Network
  3. Creation of steering committee: Steering committee composed of each group – colleges, campus ministry, lay schools/synods, Covenant Cluster, outdoor ministries, regional staff, LACE, with V&E and Augsburg Fortress in an advisory capacity – start with individuals who have been in attendance. At 2009 meeting, the current planning committee leave time for and organize the first meeting of the steering committee – specifically allowing time for determination of steering committee membership
  4. Goals
    1. Keep this consultation going
    2. Steering committee is charged with determining next steps – eg. Whether or not to incorporate
    3. Determine relationship of network to cluster
    4. Steering committee to take charge of next meetings
    5. Refine/define a mission statement from the point of view of the entire network.

Members of the working group included Jim Echols, Lynn Smith, Don Huber, Bob Haak, Peggy Ogden-Howe, and Doug Liston.

### Planning for the Future

**Next Consultation of the Covenant Cluster Network:** The consensus of the group was to stay at the Marrillac Center, February 26-28, 2009, with caucuses beginning with lunch on Thursday and concluding with lunch on Saturday. The planning team is encouraged to explore development of scholarships to encourage participation of younger persons and to include greater ethnic diversity.

### **Possible themes:**

1. Bible Book of Faith structure and implementation, with inclusion of Bible Study, using a variety of formats
2. What is happening in teaching and learning? How can theological education (at all levels) use the results of current research and innovative techniques to be more effective?

**Planning Team for 2009:** Ramona Bouzard, Dick Bruesehoff, Greg Kaufmann (co-chair), Doug Liston, Tom Ludwig (co-chair), Marcus Pera, Winston Persaud, Marilyn Smith, Marianne Wilkinson.

Worship – Morning Closing Prayer led by Dwight DuBois and Janice Kibler

Special Thanks to Janice Kibler for organizing the Worship sessions and providing the musical accompaniment.

Notes prepared by Dick Bruesehoff, with assistance from Kadi Billman, Greg Kaufmann, and Tom Ludwig.