



A publication of the New Jersey Diakonia Steering Committee

## “Still Reforming in Christ”

### ANNUAL FALL RETREAT

Diakonia students, graduates and instructors are invited

**Friday—Saturday, October 30—31, 2015**

**Cross Roads Camp & Retreat Center, Port Murray, NJ**

The retreat will focus on personal reforming—yesterday, today and the tomorrow. Please read pages 2 and 3 regarding retreat topics.

#### Friday, October 30

- Come anytime after 3:00 PM. Take time to center yourself with a variety of material provided including a walking meditation guide created just for Cross Roads.
- Dinner will be served at 5:30 PM, followed by session one of our program and then evening worship.

#### Saturday, October 31

- We begin at 7:30 AM with morning prayer, followed by breakfast at 8:00 AM and then session two of the program with Rev. Stiger.
- Lunch is at noon and followed by worship with the Eucharist.
- At 2:30 PM we begin our third session.
- We will conclude with closing worship in the afternoon.

Our leaders are:

- Rev. Don Stiger will join on us Saturday. He is Sr. Vice President for Mission and Spiritual Care at Lutheran Health Care Brooklyn, NJ and a member of Good Shepherd, Somerville.
- Rev. Matt Cimorelli is our Worship Leader and Pastor for the Retreat. He will be available for private confession and personal counseling during the weekend. He is Executive Director of NJ Diakonia and currently serves at Reformation Lutheran Church in West Long Branch. Pastor Matt is a member of the Synod LGBT Task Group, and the Board for Garden State Equality.
- Linda Walker, Associate in Ministry, is our coordinator. Linda is a member of the NJ Diakonia Steering Committee, a retired Christian Educator and member of St. John, Summit.

**Register Today—Page 6**

Contact us by October 10.

### HIGHLIGHTS IN THIS EDITION

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### CALENDAR

- NJ Women of the ELCA Convention, Saturday, Sept. 26 at St. Paul, Beachwood, NJ
- October 4, NJ Steering Committee Meeting, Site and time TBA.
- October 30-31, NJ Diakonia Retreat.
- March 5, 2016 diakonia Gathering Rev. Dr. Timothy J. Wengert, Site TBA



### DIAKONIA CONTACT INFO

7 Round Valley Lane  
Lakewood, NJ 08701

Email ~ diakonia@comcast.net

Visit our updated website at  
[www.njdiakonia.com](http://www.njdiakonia.com)  
please note corrected URL.

*Vision:* “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12)

*Mission:* Diakonia is an education program to provide spiritual formation to men and women desiring to deepen their understanding of the faith so they might become empowered servants of the Lord.



## THE PASTOR'S CORNER

My dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

In just two years and one month, in October, 2017, we will commemorate the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation. And the language I used in the focus box is intentional. This is a commemoration. This is not a time for Lutheran (or Protestant) chest-thumping against our Roman Catholic sisters and brothers.

This is a time to remember who we are as God's people in the light of God's desire for the Church to be one in Christ, even as Christ and the Father are one. We can, of course, celebrate in the Gospel – in the good news of God's saving love for all that God has made – but we must just as earnestly repent of our part in causing disunity within the Body of Christ. Thus, we are embarking together with our ecumenical partners, on a time of commemoration of this 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

Around the Church and around the globe there will be various gatherings and activities marking this anniversary, not least of which will be a worship service on October 31, 2016, using a liturgy being developed by Dirk Lange, a professor from Luther Seminary, who has been hired to develop this liturgy by the Vatican and the Lutheran World Federation. This liturgy will begin the year-long commemoration. But, of course, commemorations are only part of the story – and a lesser part, if you ask me.

The real exciting part of this story is in our understanding of God's activity within the Church, making us "reformed and ever reforming." The reformed part can be commemorated. It can be remembered. We can even repent of our sinfulness and failures along the way. But being reformed is only a part of who and what we are. We are also ever reforming, meaning, God's not done with us yet!

**It is an exciting time to be alive!**

**It is an exciting time to be a Christian!**

Pastor Matthew Cimorelli, Executive Director  
Steering Committee Diakonia of New Jersey

The impending anniversary, therefore, gives us an opportunity to consider together the work of God in and through the Church in terms of history – what God did before and during these last 500 years; in terms of contemporary issues – what God's up to now as we seek to take full advantage of this anniversary to advance ecumenism and the visible unity of the Church; and in terms of the future – as those who are ever reforming and with whom God is not done working.

With this in mind I encourage you to take full advantage of several events upcoming on our diakonia calendar. Beginning with a presentation by Rev. Dr. Timothy J. Wengert at our

**GATHERING ON SATURDAY, MARCH 5, 2016**, and continuing through our 2016 fall retreat and 2017 Gathering, we will be delving deeply into the meaning of the Reformation then, now and in the future.

In advance of this process of study, join us at

**FALL RETREAT ON OCTOBER 30-31**

Rev. Don Stiger, will lead us in study and conversation around the theme of personal reformation – looking at Martin Luther, excerpts from the book "Convictions" by Marcus Borg, and keeping an eye toward God's continuing reforming work within each of us as well.

Together with the whole Steering Committee, I hope that you are excited by this prospect and that you will make every effort to participate fully in this process of study.

Grace, mercy and peace be with you all in the name of the Triune God.

Pastor Matthew Cimorelli



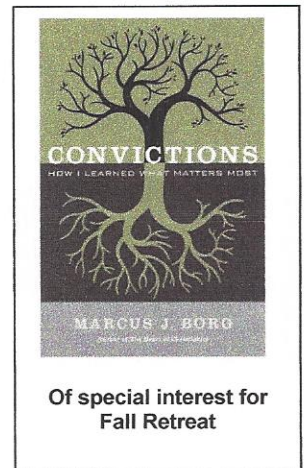
"I believe I do believe, truly I believe it" is from a song written by Dakota Road that restates the Apostles Creed in very simplistic language. We loved singing this song in the 90's as part of worship at youth gatherings. We wanted to believe the fundamentals of our faith.

"Convictions – How I learned What Matters Most". Marcus Borg, in this his last book, looks back on his life, his studies and his experiences to restate what he believes about the bedrock of Christianity and the Bible. At the end of this book he states, "What's it all about? What's the Christian life all about? It's about loving God and loving what God loves. It's about becoming passionate about God and participating in God's passion for a different kind of world, here and now."

Borg wrestles with the inconsistencies of Christian beliefs and how he reads the Bible. What are we to do about scientific evidence that contradicts scripture that we hold to be holy? How do we reconcile our life experiences and the teachings of Jesus? How does the context and culture of the Bible open a window on how we can read scripture today? Borg writes compellingly about the beliefs that can deeply ground us and gives up understanding the 'how' for a deeper embrace of the 'why' and for 'whom'. He digs deep into the book of Amos to explore God's passion for justice and love for the poor.

I invite you to walk with Marcus Borg on his faith journey and discover your own place and beliefs in the Christian life we share together in community.

Linda Walker, Associate in Ministry in NJ Synod  
and Member of the NJ Diakonia Steering Committee



#### FROM THE CHAIR

It never ceases to amaze me how the Spirit works in our lives. Seven years ago I started the diakonia program. I first heard about diakonia four years earlier, but always had an excuse for not registering. When I finished graduate school, I had no excuses and for two years I wondered why would I do this and how would it impact my life. It did not take long upon starting classes that I began to get answers to my questions. My fellow students and the instructors listened to my fears and doubts and helped me learn to listen to God's desires for me. As soon as my graduation ceremony was over I began missing my connection to my colleagues and in my mind, with God. At graduation someone mentioned they were looking for graduates for serve on the NJ diakonia Steering Committee, the group who works to keep the program running and expanding. I volunteered immediately.

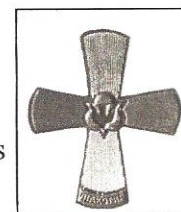
**Serving on the NJ diakonia** Steering Committee has given me the opportunity to meet many people across the state and the nation who have also committed themselves to doing God's will. Four to six times a year the committee meets to ensure that the program remains consistent across the state, and to provide additional programs beyond the classes.

**We are thankful** to the NJ Synod for a stipend of \$1500 per year. This money is used to defray the costs of our retreat, gathering and graduation as well as augment scholarships for students who cannot afford the cost of tuition and programs. Registration fees for the retreat and gathering do not cover all of the costs of these programs and we try hard to keep costs at a minimum. I would like to thank everyone who spoke in favor of returning the \$1500 to the 2016 Synod budget.

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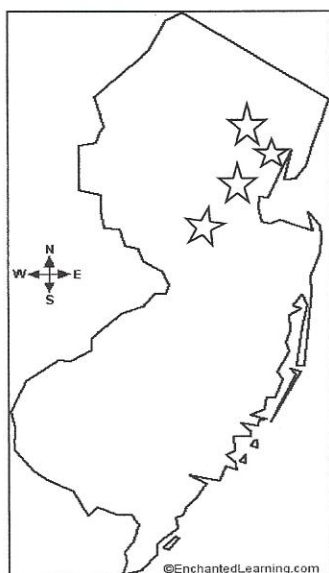
*Diakonia Steering Committee continued from previous page***Beyond New Jersey**

As I began my work with the NJ diakonia Steering Committee, I learned that there is also a national steering committee and NJ needed a delegate to the committee. Within 6 months of graduation, I was the chair of the NJ Steering Committee and a delegate to the National Committee. The Spirit was moving me in directions that I never could have imagined. This fall diakonia classes will be held in the following synods: New Jersey, Southeastern Pennsylvania, Metropolitan Chicago, Metropolitan New York, Northern Illinois, Greater Milwaukee, Florida/Bahamas, Indiana-Kentucky, Lower Susquehanna Pennsylvania and Northeastern Ohio. Work is underway to add three more synods to our ranks. It is comforting to me to remember that we are part of a much larger program. Remember that cross you received at your graduation? All diakonia graduates across the synods listed above also received the same crosses!



The Spirit continues to work in mysterious ways in my life. On July 2, I was honored to be elected as Chairperson of the National Diakonia Steering Committee. I look forward to serving diakonia students and graduates across the country. I would love to hear your diakonia stories. Please email them to me at [diakonia@comcast.net](mailto:diakonia@comcast.net), I would love to share them in future newsletters.

Ellen Lindemann, Chair, NJ Diakonia Steering Committee

**2015-2016 diakonia classes are held at several Lutheran churches in New Jersey**

- ★ Bilingual Class English/Spanish  
Iglesias Evangelica Luterana Santa Isabel, 908 East Jersey Street, Elizabeth, NJ  
Classes meet on Saturdays. Semester starts Oct. 10  
Rev. Ramon and Marisol Collazo, 908-209-0335,  
[pastorsantaisabel@yahoo.com](mailto:pastorsantaisabel@yahoo.com)
- ★ Good Shepherd, 300 Union Ave., Somerville, NJ  
Classes meet on Tuesday evenings, 7-10 PM. Semester starts Oct. 6  
Joan Grace, 908-526-2602, [joangrace511@optimum.net](mailto:joangrace511@optimum.net)
- ★ St. John's, 155 North Street, Jersey City NJ  
Classes meet on Thursday evenings, 7-10 PM. Semester starts Sept. 24  
Rose Davis, 201-214-5300, [rosednj25@aim.com](mailto:rosednj25@aim.com).
- ★ St. Paul, Teaneck, 61 Church Street, Teaneck, NJ  
Classes meet on Thursday evenings, Semester starts Sept. 17  
Sharla DeLawter, 973-304-1362, [sharladel@aol.com](mailto:sharladel@aol.com)

The NJ Steering Committee will gladly give a presentation at your church for prospective students or if you would

**WE ARE SEARCHING FOR A WEB MASTER**

Are you a savvy computer user? Do you enjoy connecting with others on the computer? If this is your gift, please consider being a web master for the Diakonia site. Please take a look at our new and improved website at

[www.njdiakonia.com](http://www.njdiakonia.com)

Contact Ellen Lindemann at [diakonia@comcast.net](mailto:diakonia@comcast.net)

**NJ SYNOD NEWSLETTER**

If you are interested in receiving this information via the internet, you can sign up for Jersey Jottings, the Synod newsletter, go to <http://www.njsynod.org/content/view/204/213/>, scroll to the bottom of the page and sign up.

**CONGRATULATIONS NEW JERSEY DIAKONIA GRADUATES**

Barbara Devlin, St Paul Lutheran Church, Beachwood, NJ  
 Steven Crofts, Living Waters Lutheran Church, Ringoes, NJ  
 Susan P. Fasano, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Dumont, NJ

A Festival Service of Holy Communion  
 was held on June 27, 2015

at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Florham Park, NJ

Having completed their studies, students gathered with family and friends to celebrate with worship and a lovely reception.

Many thanks to the special people who made this day special:

Good Shepherd, Florham Park, Rev. Wendy Abrahamson who presided at the service and the congregation for their hospitality.

Rev. Ramon Collazo, Iglesias Evangelica Luterana Santa Isabel, Elizabeth, for an inspiring sermon.

Charles German, Organist and Music Coordinator from Good Shepherd, Somerville for music that enhanced our worship.



2015 Graduates celebrating at reception.

**CHRIST CENTER AT CROSS ROADS IS THE SITE OF DIAKONIA ANNUAL RETREAT THIS YEAR.**

**CROSS**  **ROADS**

**CAMP AND RETREAT CENTER**

Pleasant Grove Road in Port Murray, NJ  
 (908) 832-7264

<http://crossroadsretreat.com>

[www.facebook.com/CrossRoadsRetreat](http://www.facebook.com/CrossRoadsRetreat)

Located on 250 mountaintop acres in the beautiful highlands of northwestern NJ. The retreat center and camp provide comfortable facilities, picturesque grounds, and transformational experiences for all ages.

Cross Roads is a welcoming, ecumenical camp of the NJ Synod of the ELCA and the Episcopal Diocese of Newark.

The Christ Center at the camp was built specifically for adult retreat groups housing 1-2 groups of up to 30 people. Private bedrooms and bathrooms. Equipped with a kitchenette and three spacious meeting rooms - the main one with cathedral ceilings, comfortable sofas, and a beautiful

**CROSS ROADS IS MORE THAN CAMP**

Throughout the year, Cross Roads provides a variety of opportunities for men and women, youth workers, SCS teachers, church leaders as well as retreats for Middle School, High School and Confirmation Students. Upcoming events are:

**WEDNESDAY AWAY—OCTOBER 7** and first Wednesday of month, 9:00 AM—3:00 PM

Join us for a time of rest and renewal in the Christ Center, a time for prayer and conversation. A Spiritual Director will be available throughout the day. Cost of \$50.00 includes lunch.

October 7: Music as Meditation with Rev. Dale Selover.

November 4: The Spiritual Practice of Being—Catching the Rhythm of God's Voice with Rev. Wendy Abrahamson.

December 2<sup>nd</sup> Advent Attention with Rev. Laurie Matarazzo.

**RALLY FOR CROSS ROADS—OCTOBER 10-11. 9:00 PM SATURDAY EVENING TO 9:00 AM SUNDAY MORNING**

Help keep camp affordable with 12 hours of non-stop fun! Volleyball, movies, arts and crafts, food music, games, prizes and more. Check in begins at 9:00 PM Saturday evening and ends Sunday after breakfast. **FOR ALL AGES.**

**Retreat Registration—Oct. 30-31, 2015 - “Still Reforming in Christ”  
At Cross Roads Camp & Retreat Center, Port Murray, NJ**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ email: \_\_\_\_\_

Roommate Preference, if any: \_\_\_\_\_

I need a handicapped accessible room.

Two Day Staying Overnight \$150.00  
Incl. Three Meals, Friday Dinner,  
Saturday Breakfast and Lunch

Two-Days Commuter \$100.00  
Incl. Three Meals, Friday Dinner,  
Saturday Breakfast and Lunch

Saturday Only \$75.00  
Incl. Breakfast and Lunch

Friday Only \$50.00  
Incl. Light Dinner

All linens and towels are provided. Bring your own toiletries. Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**REGISTER BY OCTOBER 10.** Make checks payable to “diakonia” and forward registration, checks and questions to:  
Marlene Tona, Treasurer, diakonia, 7 Round Valley Lane, Lakewood, NJ 08701  
732-617-9109 or matona@optonline.net



**diakonia Shirts  
Order Form**

Date of Order: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ **Alt. Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

<u>Short Sleeve Golf shirts</u>	
White with diakonia logo in red	
Size S to XL	\$ 24.00
Size 2X	\$ 25.50
Size 3X	\$ 27.00
<u>Long Sleeve Sweatshirts</u>	
White with diakonia logo in red	
Sizes S to XL	\$ 20.00
Size 2X	\$ 21.50
Size 3X	\$ 23.00

Make checks payable to “diakonia”  
Mail your check and this form to:  
Marlene Tona, Treasurer  
7 Round Valley Lane.  
Lakewood, NJ 08701

Size	Golf Shirt	Sweatshirt	Sub Total	Shipping	Total
				\$5.00	