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## Part 2 of 2: 6 Questions with...Site Coordinators



### This month: Meet Mike Bennett

#### Tell us a little about yourself:

I am a 73-year old ELCA Lutheran, retired from a career in accounting and then corporate finance. I grew up in the Evangelical Covenant Church; my wife and I only found the Lutheran Church in 1993. We're members of St James Lutheran Church in Lake Forest, Illinois, where I teach 7th-8th grade Sunday School, assist in worship, play in the brass ensemble, sit on a couple of committees, and have served two congregation council terms. I am a board member and Audit

Committee Chairman for Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, and was a voting member of the 2005 Churchwide Assembly. I tutor college-level accounting and auditing online (the commute is great!) and volunteer as a grade school tutor in North Chicago for North Chicago Community Partners, and as a tutor for older kids in Waukegan, for the Waukegen2College organization. We have two dogs, two grown children, and are grandparents.

**How did you come to know about diakonia?** I attended a Synod Assembly breakout session presenting diakonia in 2003. I was intrigued by what I learned, brought home the big double-sided foldout sheet that summarizes the two years of courses, and looked at it off and on for a couple of days. Finally I showed it to my wife, and said, "I must be crazy; I want to do this." A couple of days later she gave it back to me and said, "I'm crazy; I want to do it too." So from Autumn 2003 to Spring 2005 we were diakonia students together.

**Why did you decide to be a site coordinator?** As we attended diakonia, I learned from Rebecca Dahlstrom about diakonia promotions that were being done in the Greater Milwaukee Synod. Because I like diakonia, we live not too far from Milwaukee, and I don't mind talking in public, I volunteered to be part of two or three such promotional sessions. When the Greater Milwaukee diakonia program started up in Autumn 2005 (or 2006?) a site coordinator was needed. I mentally reviewed the home locations of other Metro Chicago diakonia graduates, and realized I lived closest to Milwaukee. (As I slept on the north side of the bed and my garage space was nearest the street, I was even closer than my wife). So I volunteered to do it.

## What are the three most important observations you can share about diakonia classes?

- I call diakonia "Seminary lite, with no Greek, Hebrew, or preaching" (except they lied to us about the preaching).
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- My fellow students were active participants, and we learned a bit from one another as well as from the instructors.
- The quality of faculty was amazing, ranging from Frank Senn (who literally wrote the book) for worship and liturgy to an assortment of parish Pastors who would have been great teachers if they weren't so busy being pastors.

**What is your favorite class and why?** Difficult choice. I have to select New Testament, because it was our first course. It set the tone for our entire two years (see 4 above). It was taught by a Chicago Pastor named Jensen Seyenkulo, who loved the New Testament (especially Mark's gospel) and was a scholar as well as a pastor. He was elected Bishop of The Lutheran Church in Liberia in 2012.

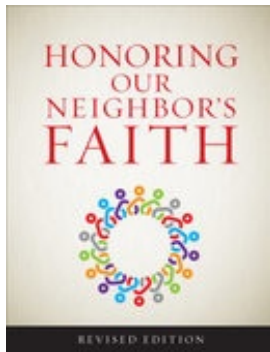
**What is one thing about you that would surprise us?** In 7th grade I started playing football and trombone. I still play trombone, currently in Lake Forest Civic Orchestra, Waukegan Summer Band, Deerfield Community Band, and St James's brass ensemble.

**How can we pray for you?** As many years of good health as God will give me, to serve my neighbor. The good sense to know when to get out of the way to let others do some things I've been doing. (One reason I started teaching 7th and 8th graders many years ago was that I wanted to be sure they saw Church isn't just for women. Now I don't want them to think it's just for women and old men, so it will be time to get out of the way sometime).

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## Weekly Lent Meditations

Read a series of weekly Lenten [meditations](#) from ELCA pastor Kurt Lammi titled "Water and the word create new life."



### Good Reads

**Title:** Honoring Our Neighbor's Faith

**Editor:** Robert Buckley Farlee

Hundreds of Christian denominations and dozens of non-Christian traditions have followers in the United States. How do we view this wide variety of beliefs and practices? How does the Lutheran tradition compare with others? Since its release in 1999, [Honoring Our Neighbor's Faith](#) has been widely embraced as a valuable resource for congregational study or personal exploration around these questions.

Available from [Augsburg Fortress](#).



Read Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton's [pastoral message](#) on Jerusalem.

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We can all learn from each other's journeys before, during and after the program.

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