

[High Tech/ High Touch Gathering](#)

March 28th, 2007 by Beth A. Lewis

Who would have guessed that on a Saturday in March (last Saturday, to be exact), 250 people from 77 congregations in 4 or 5 states would gather in [Tomahawk, Wisconsin](#) for an all day conference named “High Tech/High Touch: Tools for Meaningful Ministry?”

Sponsored by the resource centers for the [ELCA](#)’s [East Central Synod of Wisconsin](#) and the [Northwest Synod of Wisconsin](#), it was a delightful example of ministry, mission, collaboration, hospitality and learning all rolled into one! Many people worked on this gathering, but special thanks go to [resource center](#) leaders Greg Kaufmann and Bonnie Weber from Eau Claire and Darlene Kalfahs and Dolly Bilstad from Appleton.

We were all warmly hosted by Pastor Mark Ziemer and his colleagues from [Grace Lutheran Church](#) in Tomahawk. They couldn’t have been more welcoming and generous as 250 of us invaded their lovely space!

I had the privilege of being the keynote speaker and presenting “Gutenberg to Google: Proclaiming the Gospel for the 21st Century.” It was especially fun to see Pastor Dennis Ellisen from [Our Saviour Lutheran Church](#) in Appleton, WI in the audience since I quote him whenever I give this speech. He has been very generous in his praise of our Internet-based intergenerational faith formation resource, [Akaloo!](#)

In addition three of my colleagues participated in this event. Mark Stahura led a workshop on our web-based worship planning resource, [Sundaysandseasons.com](#). Leslee Nestingen led an [Akaloo](#) workshop. In this, she showed attendees how to “test drive” Akaloo by signing up for our [free trial offer](#) and/or by signing up for one of our [free webinar workshops](#). Lori Nicol, Leslee and Mark all worked in the Augsburg Fortress display and bookstore area, as well.

One of our authors, [Bob Driver-Bishop](#), senior pastor at [Redeemer Lutheran Church](#) in Mclean, VA was also a workshop leader. His topic was E-Vangelism. As always, Bob gave a highly energetic and informative presentation on how congregations can creatively use technology for outreach, evangelism, staying connected with their members Monday through Saturday, and for faith formation and worship.

There were a number of other excellent sessions. The one other that I personally attended was given by Pastor Janice Kuder and two of her colleagues from [St. Peter’s Lutheran Church](#) in Big Falls, WI and St. Paul’s Lutheran Church in Dupont, WI. They were superb! They were engaging, practical and inspirational. Pastor Janice shared the ways that they use technology, especially in worship, in these two small, rural congregations. One has very traditional 60+ year old space, but they’ve made it work. One has recently built a new sanctuary complete with three projectors for the worshippers to view and one for the pastors and other worship leaders to view. While Pastor Janice was quick to point out that there are many more positive initiatives going on at St. Peter’s than the integration of technology in worship, it must be noted that their attendance has almost doubled from 60 worshippers per week to over 100! This remarkable growth is, as

they proudly point out, “in the smallest incorporated village in the state of Wisconsin...population 84!” There are some good lessons to be learned from this team by other congregational leaders and by those of us in the ministry of publishing!

So, if you happen to see “High Tech/High Touch, part 2” promoted anytime soon. I would recommend that you put it on your calendar! It was one of the best events I have attended in my 4 1/2 years with Augsburg Fortress!

Thank you to everyone who worked on it!

Blessings,

Beth