

**2008 Bulletin of Reports
Delaware-Maryland Synod**

CONFERENCES

Baltimore City Conference

The City of Baltimore is a City of God. We know that because of the vibrancy of the many churches that see the city as their mission field, not just Lutheran churches. We further know that when we witness people gathering for worship and prayer, and who understand one of the best ways to touch God is by helping each other here on earth.

In Word and Sacrament, God is present to the people of Baltimore. Worship runs the gamut from Martin Luther Day commemorations, the celebration of the Great Vigil of Easter, revival series in which Lutherans gather with the faithful of others denominations, youth rallies, and informal bible-based worship services in nursing home dining rooms.

The ordained clergy of Baltimore work in concert through the Baltimore City conference, through shared bible study, and under the umbrella of organizations such as the Coalition of Lutherans Advancing in Mission! (CLAIM!). This past year, CLAIM! undertook an assessment of the city church in order to lay out a strategic plan for the future, working toward the growth and health of the city Lutheran church. Lay leaders function not only in their individual congregations, but also in dynamic organizational positions in the synod and in the wider church and secular communities.

In the past year, the city has celebrated ordinations, installations, and anniversaries. The City of Baltimore is realizing a growth spurt. New housing is planned for East Baltimore, West Port, and in the Old Downtown area, among other areas. Lutherans are involved in leadership positions in community development corporations that will help spearhead new housing, work, and economic development opportunities throughout the city.

This is not to suggest that there are no problems in Baltimore, far from it. Crime continues to plague the city, particularly in certain neighborhoods; and the economic downturn hurts, while prices for food and fuel continue to rise, straining many of our most fragile citizens past the breaking point. The City of Baltimore is not yet the City of Zion, the city on a hill. There is still a lot more work to be done. Lutherans will be vital participants in that crucial work.

In the meantime, Baltimore Lutherans celebrate the many graces we receive from God, braced by our work in growing the church. That task will continue to require prayer and hard work. City Lutherans understand that if we put our shoulder to the wheel, God will help us find the strength to push where we need to go.

The Rev. Neil O'Farrell, dean