

## **Goodbye Bethany and Midland; Rest in Peace Dana**

Reflections by Rev. Dr. Carl L. Hansen, Interim Pastor, Atonement Lutheran Church, Denver.

Late Saturday morning, as the Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly for 2011 was winding down, one of the final items of business had to do with a two-page report on proposed changes to the Synod Constitution. The entire document was accepted without discussion, including a few words noting that Bethany College and Midland College (now Midland University) are no longer “officially related” to the Rocky Mountain Synod, ELCA. Dana College was not mentioned at all, having closed its doors in the summer of 2011.

This constitutional change came as no surprise. It was clearly necessary because the Rocky Mountain Synod has, since the formation of the ELCA, been oriented toward the west rather than the mid-west. California Lutheran College is designated as “our” college as part of “Region 2” to which the Synod belongs; not Bethany, Midland, and Dana.

As an alumnus and former faculty member of Bethany and as President Emeritus of Midland, where our institution had close ties, if sometimes competitive ties, with Dana, I felt a need to express some things that were too wordy and emotional to be done from a microphone on the floor of the assembly, especially when official business was winding down and everyone was eager to move on to the closing service of worship and begin our travels home.

Once upon a time, the predecessor congregations in our area that made up the Lutheran Church in America and the American Lutheran Church, and before that bodies such as the Augustana Synod, gave birth to these institutions in Nebraska and Kansas, and supported them through the difficult times of two world wars and the Great Depression. Up until about two decades ago, Bethany, Dana, and Midland were included in the benevolence support of Rocky Mountain Synod, with regular written and sometimes oral reports provided each time the synod met. For understandable reasons, the financial support was gradually reduced and eventually ended. But throughout the decades, students made their way

from the territory of the Synod to join the student bodies of Bethany, Dana, and Midland, returning as alumni to enrich our congregations and our synod in innumerable ways. And, thanks be to God, that symbiotic relationship between college, congregations, and synod continues. So as the official, constitutional relationship comes to an end, let us give thanks to God for the ways in which these and other church-related Lutheran colleges and Universities have enriched the church and the ways in which the church has supported them. May that support continue, not only for California Lutheran but for all our Lutheran Institutions of Higher Learning. It is with thanks to God that we say: "Goodbye Bethany, Goodbye Midland, Rest in Peace, Dana."