

The name is new but the ministry hasn't changed

Board of Social Ministry is now "Ecumen"

For decades a statewide network of care facilities, most of which were founded by Swedish Lutherans, was administered under the cumbersome (and not very informative) name "Board of Social Ministry."

No more. Beginning August 1, the 77-facility network is calling itself "Ecumen," a title rooted in a Greek word meaning "house" or "dwelling" and calling to mind the cooperative term "ecumenical."

Kathryn Roberts, Ecumen CEO, told *Metro Lutheran*, "We hired a firm to look at our [old] name and tell us how it registered with people. They took a year researching it and told us 'Board of Social Ministry' had low name recognition. So we went looking for something better. There were four finalists. We decided Ecumen was the best one."

The local care centers,



Above: The Rev. Mike Carlson, chaplain at Martin Luther Manor, an Ecumen facility, serves Holy Communion to a resident.

METRO LUTHERAN PHOTO: DICK WISTRAND



Left: Kathryn Roberts is the new CEO of Ecumen.

PHOTO: ECUMEN

scattered across Minnesota (plus one in Wisconsin and four in Iowa) kept their old names. For example, Martin Luther Manor in Bloomington, Minnesota, is still Martin Luther Manor.

Many in the Twin Cities may not know much about the Ecumen network

because most of the care centers are in small towns around the state of Minnesota. Many were founded by local Lutheran congregations.

With its extensive network of facilities, Ecumen is the largest non-profit provider of senior services in Minnesota and the fifth largest such group nationwide.

Says Roberts, "I was at the state capitol, advocating on behalf of our ministry with Charlie Weaver, whose department deals with groups like ours. I was astonished to learn that he'd never heard of us." With a wry smile, she added, "Before I interviewed for my present position, I'd never heard of the Board of Social Ministry either."

Roberts and her leadership team are busy developing a plan to grow into a rapidly changing reality in American life — the arrival

Senior Living

at retirement age of the Baby Boomer generation.

"I'm part of that generation, and I'm proud of it," she says. "These folks are a really demanding group. They expect good services. They're more information-savvy than their parents were and they have higher expectations than the generation before them."

Roberts says Ecumen intends to provide a wider range of options, from services to those living in their own homes to care in institutional settings. "Skilled care is still important, but we want to focus on community care as well. It's not just about buildings. Other care options are also needed."

— Michael L. Sherer

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