

Greater Milwaukee Synod  
Youth and Family Ministry Synod Assembly Report  
May 30-June 1, 2013

**Focus Areas and Background:** Last year the Cross+Generational Ministry Team<sup>1</sup> introduced a unifying vision and mission statement for youth and family ministry in the Greater Milwaukee Synod. This year, the Synod's Youth and Family Ministry Coordination, Kate Mattson, focused on ministries that fit under the "3 E" mission statement:

**Engage, Equip, and Empower<sup>2</sup>**

*The Greater Milwaukee Synod Cross+Generational Ministry Team accompanies congregations in cultivating followers of Jesus by:*

- *Engaging congregations in Cross+Generational ministry.*
- *Equipping leadership with tools, theory, and Lutheran theology for excellence in ministry.*
- *Empowering youth and young adults to practice using their God-given gifts in service to the Church & the world.*

**Engage:** *The Cross+Generational Ministry Team seeks to engage congregations in conversation about cross+generational ministry within their context.*

Throughout the year, Kate Mattson worked closely with 5 churches, engaging them in conversations about Cross+Generational Ministry in their context. Often the impetus for discussions like these is the hiring of a new youth and family minister or the creation of a new position. Other members of the Cross+Generational Ministry Team have also conversed with these congregations to help them celebrate the Cross+Generational Ministry they are already doing and to look for other ways to live into this way of doing ministry.

The Cross+Generational Ministry Team, has put together a general presentation on cross+generational ministry, which highlights its definition and provides adaptable tools to congregations and leaders. We continue to offer this interactive presentation when requested by congregations and groups. We are also in the process of forming an Engage Task Force, so we can begin to ask congregations if they would be interested in a task force member coming to talk with them and accompany them in contextual cross+generational ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Acomponado, Director of Youth and Family Ministry, Norway, Wind Lake; Erica Chapellear, Director of Lay Ministry, Lake Park, Milwaukee; Dave Dringenburg, Director of Lay Ministry, Cross+Generational Ministry, & Global Missions, Atonement, Muskego; Rev. Andy Feters, St. Mark's, Waukesha; Amanda Juedes, Director of Youth Ministry, Our Savior's, West Bend; Kate Mattson, Synod Youth and Family Ministry Coordinator; and Josh Young, lay person and owner of Digital Spokes Media Company

<sup>2</sup> <sup>1</sup> The whole Cross+Generational Ministry Vision & Mission statement can be found at [www.milwaukee-synod.org/what-we-do/youth-and-family-ministry](http://www.milwaukee-synod.org/what-we-do/youth-and-family-ministry)

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**Equip:** *The Cross+Generational Ministry Team seeks to equip leaders with theology and Lutheran doctrine, theory, and practical tools so that they can do excellent ministry.*

The Equip Task Force is creating a list of standard areas of education. We will encourage each youth and family ministry leader to strive to attain these standards, not because this will determine anything professionally but because it will benefit the individual leader, our synod's network of leaders, and our church as a whole. The Equip Task Force is designing a calendar of topics for the Youth and Family Ministry Leaders Network Meeting, as well as special educational events, that strives to reach those leaders new to Youth and Family Ministry as well as more experienced Youth and Family Ministry leaders. The focus for equipping is the 3 T's: Theology, Theory, and Tools.

Each month, the Youth and Family Ministry Leaders Network met to network and learn together. Each month, we meet at a different church and cover a different topic. The Network discussed Campus Ministry, Safety Policies, the Cross+Generational Ministry Mission and Vision, Evangelism, Anti-Racism, Preventing Sexual Abuse, .

More than 650 youth, young adults, and adult leaders participated in the ELCA National Youth Gathering. Preparing for the National Youth Gathering, required our synod Coach and Coordinator for the Gathering, Elisabeth Pynn Himmelman, and our Synod Youth and Family Ministry Coordinator Kate Mattson, to do a lot of equipping prior to the ELCA National Youth Gathering. They led training sessions for youth and adult leaders. Topics included poverty sensitivity training, small group leader training, cultural sensitivity training. We also had a commissioning and sending service attended by over 200 youth, adult leaders, and families.

Kate Mattson has been working with Pastor Sandy Chrostowski and the Rediscovering Macedonia Team to help facilitate monthly webinars on the topic of Life-long Stewardship. As part of the Rediscovering Macedonia Grant, the Greater Milwaukee Synod has contracted with Jim LaDoux, Vibrant Faith Ministries, to lead a year's worth of webinars, Facebook parties, and book studies. Our hope is that people will see that stewardship is something that starts when you are grown up or just during the fall, but that it is a part of everyday life for people of all ages.

This Spring, eight Youth and Family Ministry Certification School students<sup>3</sup> presented their ministry plans based on concepts of cross+generational ministry. Two of our students presented family ministry plans. Dr. Paul Hill (Director of Vibrant Faith Ministries) was present for seven presentations. He was impressed by all of them but particularly by the two family ministry plans. Along with their ministry plans, these students also completed an intensive week of classes and training, 10 hours of Old Testament class, 10 hours of New Testament class, 10+ hours of webinar trainings, and a lay preaching workshop. Their graduation marks the end

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<sup>3</sup> John Anderson from St. Mary's, Kenosha; Jessi Braun, Christ the Servant, Waukesha; Carolyn Karl, Bay Shore, Whitefish Bay; Tina Kieckhaffer, First United, Sheboygan; Jason Martinez; Rebecca Mikelonis; Mike Van Laningham, Trinity, Kenosha.

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of the Bishop's Initiative Grant.

**Empower:** *The Cross+Generational Ministry Team strives to empower youth and young adults to use their God-given gifts in the church and the world.*

The Greater Milwaukee Synod had a large representation of presenters and participants at the ELCA National Youth Gathering. Over 650 youth, young adults, and adult leaders participated from our synod. As a synod, we gathered together in bible study and worship on Practice Discipleship Day. We had over a dozen young adults from GMS participate as servant companions, leading congregations on their Practice Justice Day. Tony Acompando (Norway Lutheran), Elijah Furquan (All People's), Eric Hoelzl (Ascension, Waukesha), Tony Memel (Ascension, Waukesha), Josiah Williams (All People's) all spoke or performed on the main stage during a Mass Gathering. Finally, pastors Chris Marien and Steve Jerbi were on the Dome Creative Team. The Gathering seeks to empower young people to live out their Christian faith in the world around them. Since the Gathering, youth have professed that the speakers, worshipping as a synod, and Practice Justice Day made a lasting impression on them.

Our winter youth and young adult gathering, Invitation to Serve (ITS), was February 1-3, 2013. Our keynote speaker, Pastor Kacey Hahn, opened the event with a vulnerability that allowed the youth and young adults to be vulnerable too. She reminded all of us that at the center of our identities we are beloved children of God, called to bring Christ's love to the world. The Holy Spirit's presence was palpable throughout the weekend. The planning team was grateful that we extended the event to two nights so that Pastor Hahn could continue to draw the participants into deeper exploration of their identities.

The ITS participants were sent out into the Waukesha community with young adults as their Servant Companions. Each group spoke to two storytellers who shared their vocational tale. We had a diverse group of storytellers including, Rev. Jim Holmberg with LSS, the founder of the Waukesha Community Arts Project, the Hope Center, the owner of a downtown chocolate shop, a lay person invested in jail ministry, Stillwaters Cancer Support Center, and more. In total we had eighteen storytellers. The vocational storytelling in the community went incredibly well with both the storytellers and the youth excited about the time they had with each other.

Eighteen young adults served at ITS as Servant Companions. Their meaningful participation in ITS made a difference on many levels: building relationships with each other and the youth, being a presence in the Waukesha community, helping with many miscellaneous tasks during the weekend. We hope to involve young adults in an equally meaningful way in 2014. Two young adults, Margo Roell from Our Savior's, West Bend and George Hoelzl from Ascension,

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Waukesha, coordinated the Servant Companions. Margo and George displayed competent and personable leadership. They were a joy to work with and they are both helping to plan Synod Assembly's hospitality toward youth and young adults.

Youth and churches have been finding creative ways to share the transformational experiences they had at ITS. For instance, at Vernon Lutheran in Mukwanago, each month, a different youth writes a column for the newsletter describing how they were affected by ITS.

Other Empower opportunities included: Love>Hate, the 100 Wells Concert, Nicaraguan and Greater Milwaukee Synod Accompaniment Trip, and several pub theology groups.

**Going Forward:** As mentioned above, the Youth and Family Ministry Coordinator position and the Youth and Family Ministry operating budget is no longer supplemented by the Bishop's Initiative Grant. The Cross+Generational Ministry Team met with Bishop Jeff Barrow to discuss a budget for 2015-2016 (the team is still revising this budget) and to talk about the vision for the \$20,000 in synod funds set aside for young adult ministry. Young adult ministries that have been a part of annual synod programming, such as the Young Adult Servant Trip to New Orleans & Invitation to Serve, have relied on supplementation from grant money. The Cross+Generational Ministry Team was grateful for Bishop Jeff's time and is grateful for his passion and dedication to the children, youth, emerging adults, and young adults in our synod.