

2016 Synod Assembly Report
Director For Evangelical Mission
Greater Milwaukee Synod
June 2 – 4, 2016

It has been a great privilege to serve on our synod staff as your Director for Evangelical Mission these past six years. I have had opportunity to preach and teach throughout our synod and walk with our congregations and their leaders through joys and sorrows. I have witnessed the generous witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as we make disciples, raise up leaders, inspire generous stewards, and welcome the power of the Holy Spirit to change hearts and lives. Among my responsibilities to accompany new and renewing congregations and leaders, provide stewardship and mission support education and training, I give thanks for the leaders who serve on our synod Stewardship and Evangelism/Outreach Teams.

Stewardship Team – Pastor Paul Bulgerin, Mr. Richard Lindberg, Pastor Grant Quever, Pastor Richard Warber, Pastor Sandy Chrostowski

Activities and events this year:

- A two-day Stewardship Fair was offered with keynote speaker, Dr. Mark Vincent, a Mennonite pastor and CEO of International Design Group. 70 people were in attendance representing 35 congregations, including a Latino, Episcopal congregation and a Baptist congregation from Illinois. A book club followed the event with a small group of participants who gathered around *Your New Money Mindset: Create A Healthy Relationship With Money*.
- A Mission Interpreter Workshop was offered at last year's Synod Assembly, and this year, Pastor Paul Bulgerin of Grace, Grafton agreed to assume the role of Mission Interpreter Co-Coordinator. Stewardship resources continue to be posted on both our Greater Milwaukee Synod and ELCA websites, which are referenced in visits to congregational meetings, retreats, and stewardship appeals. Our Synod Council also approved the membership of Sandy on the newly-formed GMS Endowment Fund. The Stewardship Team submitted monthly articles to our Greater Milwaukee e-Newsletter.
- In January, our Greater Milwaukee Synod was the recipient of a \$50,000 grant from the Siebert Lutheran Foundation to support a two-year stewardship pilot program, entitled, *Stewardship For All Seasons* with participation from seven congregations, including Atonement, Muskego; Grace, Grafton; Gethsemane, Brookfield; Lord of Life, Kenosha; Our Savior's, Milwaukee; Unity, Milwaukee; and Vernon, Mukwonago. ELCA Pastor Mike Ward, Certified Fund Raising Executive of Gronlund, Sayther, Brunkow serves as our consultant. The pastors and congregational leaders are learning how to do year-round, ongoing stewardship to equip more energized stewards to build a culture of generosity.
- This year, our Greater Milwaukee Synod was selected to participate in a two-year ELCA *Building Missional Capacity for Sustainability* pilot stewardship process. Participating churches include Living Faith, (consolidation of Atonement and Our Savior's) Racine; St. Mark, Waukesha; St. Peter, Sheboygan, and Village, Milwaukee. Goals include identifying key growth indicators for congregations; developing a missional income and spending plan; and building and sustaining congregational vitality through neighborhood outreach.
- This year, Bishop Jeff Barrow challenged our synod to hold to the \$2,000,000 Mission Support level. We received an increase of \$1,040 of synod Mission Support over the previous year. This reverses almost a decade of declining income, and more importantly, a witness that the congregations of our Greater Milwaukee Synod continue to value "church together."

Evangelism/Outreach Team – Pastor Jim Holmberg, Pastor Lindsay Jordan, Pastor Carl Lund, Pastor Sherman Martell, Pastor David Meissner, Pastor Kristin Nielsen, Mr. and Mrs. David and Nancy Slinde, Pastor Kevan Penvose, Pastor Sandy Chrostowski

This team continues to accompany synod ministries that are engaged in renewal or redevelopment efforts as well as expressions of new ministries in our midst. Activities and events this year:

- The Evangelism/Outreach Team continues to walk with congregations receiving ELCA Partnership Support including All Peoples, Milwaukee; Cross, Milwaukee; Faith/Santa Fe, Milwaukee; Hephatha, Milwaukee; Lutheran Church of the Great Spirit, Milwaukee; Redeemer, Milwaukee; Spirit of Peace, Milwaukee; and Unity, Milwaukee.
- In 2015, *Breaking the Chains Church* and *The Table*, both Milwaukee, were approved by the ELCA New Starts Table and our Greater Milwaukee Synod Council as SAWC (Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities) Explorations. *Breaking the Chains* has begun as a weekly Bible study at Felmers Cheney Correctional Center. A men's minimum security facility working in partnership with Prison Congregations of America, an ecumenical model that partners with local congregations and the community so that the men might experience a successful return to the community upon release. Leaders from Hephatha, Reformation, and Unity, Milwaukee and Our Savior's, West Bend have led, planning efforts. This month, *Breaking the Chains* received a \$50,000 grant over three years to assist the funding of a half-time called pastor or leader. *The Table: A 1st Century Style Community in the 21st Century*, is led by Venice Williams, who also directs Alice's Garden Urban Farm, and Body and Soul Healing Arts Center. *The Table* explores God's word and the meaning of the Gospel in our lives, shares food and stories, cultivates our imaginations, and partakes of The Christ Meal. *The Table* gathers on Wednesday evenings at The Body and Soul Healing Art Center.
- In March, leaders of the Evangelism/Outreach Team attended a Region 5 Transformational Ministry 2.0, train-the-trainer event in Middleton, WI to better understand what it means to be a renewing, evangelizing congregation in the mission of God; re-root in relational conversations both in congregations and local community; and learn guiding principles for God's purpose for the church to lead change.
- A new congregational self-assessment tool, *Congregational Vitality Survey*, was also introduced by the Evangelism/Outreach Team through synod workshops, church council meetings and retreats. www.congregationalvitalitysurvey.com offers a number of surveys to assist congregations in discerning levels of vitality and sustainability, and strengthens the connections we have with God, each other, and the world. This survey is funded through ELCA Mission Support.

A New Thing...

It is with a thankful heart that I write you to share with you that I have been offered and have accepted the call to serve as Director, DEM Relationships, ELCA. This leader identifies and develops Directors for Evangelical Mission across the church, coordinates the DEM Partners Team and Relators, and oversees staff who work with areas of mission support/stewardship, area ministry strategies, congregation-based community organizing, and coaching.

For the past six years, I have gratefully served as Director for Evangelical Mission of our Greater Milwaukee Synod, and have had the privilege of walking with leaders and congregations engaged in redevelopment and new start ministries, stewardship and mission support education, and strengthening the partnerships that we share as congregations, synods, and our churchwide expression. I am especially grateful to Bishop Jeff, our Synod Staff, and Synod Council for the opportunity to serve with a team of dedicated disciples of Jesus who seek to be "church together" for the sake of the world.

It has also been an honor to have been nominated as a perspective nominee for the bishop's election process. The discernment process has been a rich experience alongside our very gifted colleagues. I respectfully ask that you release my name from further consideration. I continue to trust that the Holy Spirit will lead and guide our assembly's voting members to lift up the leader whose spiritual gifts best fit the needs of our synod into the future.

As we gather for our Synod Assembly, I continue to pray the passage of Scripture that has so enlightened me in these last days:

Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? (Isaiah 43:18-19)

Thank you for your faithfulness as co-workers in the Gospel. Peace in Christ,

Sandy Chrostowski