

A MESSAGE FROM BISHOP MARTIN

To the amazing disciples of the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin,

I remember with gratitude preparing for annual meetings when I was most recently a pastor at St. John's Lutheran in Bloomer. So many reports to collect, so many people to recruit, so many meetings to plan - it was a busy time indeed! But in doing all of that work, they all came together for two important purposes:

1. To share God's stories through your ministries.
2. To plan future God stories through your ministries!

When you really think about it, annual meetings are a time to celebrate what has already happened and a way to dream about what could be in the forthcoming months and years! And from my new perspective as your bishop, I love knowing that despite all of the great things we share in common, there are so many contextual things that are happening in your congregation alone. What a blessing as we come together as fellow ELCA Lutherans, yet all distinct and unique in what God is calling us to do!

As you may know, we also share in our ministry together as the Northwest Synod of WI. There are several things to celebrate that I want to share here.

1. We continue to financially support our synod youth and their related ministries, such as our bible camps and youth gatherings.
2. We raised over \$120k for our friends in Malawi to build additional solar powered wells, despite having a goal of \$40k! It was so fun to share that information with them in person when Deacon Laura and I visited a few months ago and got to see firsthand some wells that had been built and purchased from this synod in the past.
3. We support our young adults in campus ministry, along with other young adult opportunities, such as our upcoming young adult gathering in Puerto Rico this January. This is such an important part of life as they explore their faith and make it their own and we get to help nurture those conversations!
4. We are helping our first call pastors lean into their leadership and nurture their God-given gifts as they discover the joys and opportunities of their first call experiences. This includes helping them out financially as they seek to reduce their educational debt that they bring into that first call.

Finally, I want to thank you for electing me as your bishop. Thus far, I have felt the full support of this synod as I visit congregations from week to week. The days of the election itself, along with the installation in September, have both been two of the most meaningful and life changing experiences of my life and your support is a significant part of it I have fully enjoyed visiting each congregation and look forward to seeing yours over the course of my six year tenure. Yes, I realize it will take four years to get to them all, but the way the time has been flying, it won't be long!

Please know that your synod staff are here for you and want to accompany you on your journey of faith. We will continue to pray for us all in our lives together to make sure that our relationship with you is supported and upheld in prayer, in both the joys and struggles of ministry. We want our relationships to be intentional and strong so that you never feel isolated in this work. We are grateful for your partnership in the gospel!

Privileged to serve,
Bishop Martin