

Ministry Report for Synod Council Sept. 19, 2024

I am happy to have been called to continue as Director of Evangelical Mission by our new bishop, Martin Hallom. We have been busy with the leadership transition. Along with the rest of the staff, I have enjoyed welcoming Martin and getting to know one another in this new way.

I have received a grant from the ELCA evangelism initiative to develop and hold a Fresh Expressions Sampler Tour beginning January, 2025. Lay leader and innovator, Bryan Willkom from Jesus Fit and I will travel to each conference of our synod and spend a Saturday offering the Fresh Expression of Church that he has developed in and around Eau Claire. Pastors and lay leaders will be invited to join us for Yoga Church, Book Church, Dinner Church, Trail Church and/or Beer Church at local venues such as libraries, cafes, and local pubs. The hope is to have people sample a Fresh Expression experience and then think about where and how to reach out into their community to build relationships and join in with what God is doing outside the walls of their church buildings. Bryan, other region 5 DEMS and I will also be writing a grant to the Siebert Lutheran Foundation to fund the expansion of this work in Wisconsin.

Walking Together will be held on March 22nd at Bethany Lutheran Church in Rice Lake. I have seven leaders committed to leading one or more workshops and hope that a few more will volunteer in the near future. The theme this year is "Go! Make Disciples!" The hope is to encourage people to be bold in creating relationships and community as they share their faith in Jesus.

I had a life changing experience this October 2-7 by going on the Racial Justice Pilgrimage with Rev. Joanne Sorensen and seven other folks from MN and WI, including Dale Kringle from our racial justice team. We went to the Legacy Museum (From Slavery to Mass Incarceration), many historical sites from the Civil Rights movement and talked with people who participated in the Freedom Rides, and Children's Marches for voting rights in Selma, Montgomery, Birmingham, and Atlanta. I am now more committed than ever to advocate for justice and equality for our neighbors of color. If you have never been to these places I encourage you to go and may the Holy Spirit stir you as strongly as I have been stirred.

I have also been busy preaching, leading worship, and teaching on Sundays in many congregations around the synod. I am thankful for the opportunity to serve the synod in this way. Thank you for your support in this work.

Diane House, DEM for the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin

**Deacon Lidix Montoya: Neighbor to Neighbor
REPORT TO NWSWI COUNCIL
FEB-SEPT 2024**

Anti-racism

- Second part of the ELCA program “Troubling the Waters” was developed during this period.
- UCC created “Let’s Talk” program about White Fragility was shared with some members of Trinity in Eau Claire, as well as to the Community at the Eau Claire public library in coordination with JONAH.

Lutheran Services in Spanish

Under the leadership of Pastor Phil Ruge Jones, N2N continues offering Lutheran mass the first Sunday of the month at Immanuel at 6 PM. There is always the sharing of a meal with this faith community that is consolidating in the area.

Guest Speaker/Preacher at

- UWEC Communication Science and Disorders class to talk about racial inclusivity and cultural sensitivity.
- Our Saviors in Solon Springs.
- Holy Cross, Greenwood City.
- Peace Lutheran Council at Pigeon Falls.
- Confirmation class at Ezekiel, River Falls.
- Our Saviour’s, Chippewa Falls.
- Beer Church, Eau Claire.
- Participation at “Noche en la Plaza” event at UWEC as part of the Hispanic Heritage Celebration month.
- Confirmation class at Peace, Pigeon Falls.

Partnerships

N2N is expanding its partnerships with institutions that work with Latinamerican families:

- Member of the CVTC ELL Advisory Committee.
- Part of the Eau Claire Health Alliance.
- Member of the Chippewa Valley Free Clinic Board of Directors.

La Mesa de Vecinos

During this time the Board of Directors of N2N was created and its name is “La Mesa de Vecinos”.

Members are: Pastor Greg Kaufman, Mariana Torres Wopat, pastor Dave Anderson, Joyce Anderson, deacon David Behling, pastor Karen Behling, dr Elena Casey, Brad Bishop, bishop Laurie Skow Anderson, and pastor Diane House.

Health Fairs

- West Immanuel, Osceola (first year).
- St Paul, Curtiss (third year).
- Rock Creek, Rock Falls (second year).

Continuing Education

- Certificate Program “Church Response to the Immigration Crisis” by Fuller Seminary.
- Faith Community/Parish Nursing and congregational health ministries certificate by Concordia University.

Both, work in progress.

Call Process Update

Completed – Since 2/05/24 (9)

Messiah, Washburn/First, Port Wing
Bethel, Hudson (Lead Pastor)
Central, Mondovi
Immanuel, Pepin
Trinity Valley Parish, Spring Valley
Shepherd of the Hill, Elk Mound
Colfax Lutheran, Colfax
English, Bateman/St. James Trinity, Fall Creek
Immanuel, Strum/ Elk Creek

Pr. Kristin Boland installed
Pr. Ladd Sonnenberg installed
Pr. Mara Ahles-Iverson installation 10/27
Pr. Andrew Thompson installed
Pr. Bob Friesen installation tbd
Pr. Natalie Leske installation tbd
Don Knutson – TEAM student/Wartburg Seminary
Pr. Justin Arnold installed
Pr. Terry Lorenz installed

In Process (25)

Our Savior's, Hollway/St. Paul's, Medford
Luck, Luck
Our Savior's, Iron River (pt)
Christ, Somerset (pt)
NUIC, Amery
Georgetown/Trinity, McKinley
Peace, Menomonie
Our Savior's, Amery
First Faith Valley Parish
Lakeside, Webster
Bethany, Star Prairie (pt)
Partners in Faith
Little Norway/Spirit Creek, Black River Falls
Pleasant Valley, Eleva (pt)
Rush River (pt)
Trinity, Hammond
Our Savior's, Whitehall/Grace, Pleasantville
Saron, Ashland
St. Stephen's/St. John's, Edgar
St. John's, Bloomer
West Denmark, Luck
Osseo
Taylor/Upper Beaver Creek
Mt. Zion, Hudson
Peace, Dresser (co-pastor)

Barb Krug, SAM - interim	ready to interview
Pr. Mary Ann Bowman - interim	ready to interview
Matt Dietsche, SAM - interim	ready to interview
Pr. Jeff Smith – bridge	
Loren Teig, SAM – interim	ready to interview
Pr. Diane Norstad – interim	ready to interview
Pulpit Supply	interviewing
Pr. Greg Wilcox – interim	ready to interview
Pr. P. Ruggles/Pr. D. Natzke - bridge	ready to interview
Pr. Mary Albing – admin. interim	ready to interview
Pulpit Supply	ready to interview
Jane Snowden, SAM – interim	ready to interview
Pulpit Supply	ready to interview
Pulpit Supply	ready to interview
Pulpit Supply	ready to interview
Pr. Julie Brenden	ready to interview
Scott Brown – interim	early interim
D. Chesley/N. Hanson- interim	early interim
Pulpit Supply	early interim
Pr. Gary Hedding – admin. interim	early interim
Pulpit Supply	early interim
	early interim
Pulpit Supply	early interim
Pulpit Supply	early interim
	early interim

Wartburg Seminary Rural Ministry Retreat

Pastor Bob Giese and I attended the retreat from June 25-27 to share in a conversation about rural ministry with faculty and other synods who work with SAMs. Wartburg Seminary has applied for a Lily grant to strengthen rural ministry across the church. NWSWI sent a letter of support to be considered a partner in their proposal called ***The CaSTLE Project***: The “Country and Small Town Lived Ecclesiology” Project. The purpose of this project is to instantiate a new *baptismal ecclesiology*, for a diaconal church, focused not on “pastors and programming,” but rather on formation for Christian discipleship in daily life. The activities of the grant are all focused on the development of the resources needed to support the implementation of this ecclesiology, and the formation of leaders for this ecclesiology, for the sake of the long-term thriving of small town and rural congregations. I am excited about the possibilities of the project given the reality of a clergy shortage now felt in many of our congregations who have been in lengthy call processes: five of them for 2-3 years.

Candidacy & First Call

Since February the candidacy committee has accompanied five candidates through their entrance, two through their endorsement and two through approval. Currently we have four candidates who are part of the TEEM Journey program at Wartburg – a competency based approach to seminary education. In the Region 5 first call consultations since last February three candidates have been assigned to NWSWI for first call. First Call Rostered Leaders in the synods of Wisconsin and NGLS will come together for three days of learning, fellowship and support November 10-12 at St. Anthony’s Retreat Center in Marathon City. Deacon MaryAnn Schwabe, Executive of Synod Relations will be our speaker.

BISHOP MARTIN'S REPORT

It's been an absolute joy serving in this role now that I'm two months in. Here are a few highlights to share:

Bishop's Formation

There are a total of eight newly elected bishops, seven of whom were able to gather for the initial training in June. We met a variety of ELCA churchwide staff who will walk alongside us as resource people for the journey. I am pleased to say that it was not the fire hydrant experience that most of our predecessors experienced!

All eight of us were present for the second session. Again, we met a few more Churchwide staff and went a bit deeper (especially the legal stuff), including making preparations for our first Conference of Bishops meeting.

Conference of Bishops

Region 5 was responsible for worship planning and implementation. I was blessed to play trumpet for most of it, but was also invited to step into a worship leadership role when another colleague left early to tend to a sick family member. Worship was amazing and not just because I didn't preach!

We had a wide variety of presentations made by churchwide committees, staff, and ELCA council leadership. As we move toward a Churchwide Convention next July in Phoenix, we still have much to discuss, particularly the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church (CRLC), Human Sexuality social statement reconsiderations, and the Civic Life and Faith social statement, along with elections for a new ELCA Presiding Bishop and Secretary!

Overall, this body has been one of tremendous support and wisdom already. It really has been since the election back in early June!

Synod work

Ever since mid July, I've been able to visit several congregations throughout the synod.

- As a visitor: Our Savior's Menomonie, St. John's Eau Claire, North Running Valley Colfax, Deronda Amery, Our Saviour's Chippewa Falls, Bethany Rice Lake, Cross Roberts
- As a worship leader: North Running Valley Colfax (twice), Big Drywood Cadott, Hope Brule

I've been present to celebrate two anniversaries: 125th at Deronda in Amery and 150th at Big Drywood in Cadott.

I've also tried to make contact with the infrastructure of the synod, including several conversations with synod staff, various committees, VP Al Arndt, and some of our conferences (Apple River, Heart of the North, Chippewa Valley, and St. Croix Valley). This has been one of my favorite parts - getting to know the great people of this synod. I've truly been well received, and not just because I get fed almost everywhere I go!

Installation

Hope Lutheran in Eau Claire did a tremendous job hosting the monumental event for our synod. Pastor Mary Erickson was a joy to work with and incredibly thorough. This was simply one of the best days of my life! So much visible support, so many people to see, so much music to absorb! One of these days I'll get to watch the video to soak it all in again!

Fall Ministry Retreat

Bishop Felix from the LaCrosse area synod blessed us with not only great musical talent, but also a great ability to teach and explain the history of the musical selections. Thanks to former Bishop Laurie for securing him before she left office!

This year, I wanted to offer a true retreat experience. A motto that I've leaned into ever since I heard it is this: "All we need is here." I followed that as a dean and I intend to follow that as bishop. That played out into the various conversations we had centering on how to be better leaders. Breaking into small groups to discuss self care, resource sharing, and continuing education opportunities was inspiring and well received. Having time for fellowship, games, and relaxation was great and I've heard several positive comments from those present. I also sent out a survey to those not in attendance to get their feedback about why they did not come. The hope is that we can learn from them and make any necessary changes that are in our control. Next year, we are currently exploring a venue change to either the Hudson area or Ashland area. Other sites are being solicited as well.

Overall, I was quite pleased with this year's event. But as with everything else this year, it was a learning opportunity and will be treated as such!

Faith Formation**Synod Youth Board**

- SYB met, planned, and lead middle school youth gathering (5th-8th grade); enCOURAGE; guest speaker was Tasha Schuh and she was really well-received. Breaking Chains provided worship music.
- A contingent of SYB youth attended Synod Assembly;; we did "Breakfast with the Bishops," which gave space for great conversation between the high school youth and the visiting bishops. Members of the Synod Youth Board also assisted with the bishop election, set up a ministry partner table, and gave a live update during the assembly.
- 350 participants from the NW Synod of WI attended the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans! The next Gathering will be in Minneapolis in 2027.
- Synod Youth Board president participated in the installation service for Bishop Martin Halom
- SYB will meet in November to plan the next middle school youth gathering,

Young Adults

- Young Adult Service Learning Trip to Puerto Rico will be January 3-10, 2025. We have 16 participants who will be attending. Participants were encouraged to invite their congregations to support them in this young adult ministry opportunity and several did! We will be engaging in cultural exploration, visiting the ELCA bishop's office/camp, learning about some local organizations, and diving into the history of PR as we consider how God is at work.

Youth Workers Network

- At the ELCA Youth Ministry Network's annual Extravaganza:
 - Hosted my first annual meeting as the SYMBOL Steering Team Chairperson
 - I am still searching for a region 5 and NWSWI rep to join our team
- Plan to organize our annual synod lunch for all youth workers at the Extravaganza which will take place in Louisville, KY in January 2025 – this opportunity has consistently been one of best ways to network, show support, provide resources, and answer questions among adults youth ministry leaders from NW WI.
- Had the opportunity to serve as our synod's Gathering Synod Champion; while at the Extravaganza in New Orleans

High School

- After speaking with the leadership from other WI/UP synods, we will be hosting another multi-synod summer youth gathering in 2025 for high school youth. Details will be arranged in November and registration will open in 2025. The SYB will be on board to assist with planning and leadership.

Malawi

- The Bishop's Initiative – Water is Life well campaign received enough gifts which more than doubled the original goal. Liz wired nearly \$80,000 for solar wells! I am extremely grateful for the ongoing support and generosity from this synod for this partnership.
- We have been formally invited to the installation of the newest bishop and the commissioning of the Blantyre diocese October 26-27. Bishop Martin and I will make a visit there from October 22-November 6. We will participate in the installation and celebrations, but also visit a few ministry sites and introduce martin to several leaders and programs in the ELCM.
- Malawi-themed Advent resource will be available again this year (on the synod website)
- Hope to create another Malawi themed devotional

Other initiatives

- Working on some possible sabbatical project possibilities.

- #1 – Exploration and wonder about youth ministry initiatives and research globally (Malawi, Norway, Australia, Europe, El Salvador, etc.)
- #2 – Creation of a Children’s Bible or Youth Faith Formation Resource that is illustrated and tri-lingual (English, Spanish, Chichewa) to share among our NWSWI partnership ministries (Congregations, Neighbor to Neighbor, and ELCM).