

SAINT PAUL AREA SYNOD ANNUAL REPORT January 2016

Dear Partners in Ministry,

2015 was a year of new relationships and new ventures for us in the Saint Paul Area Synod. Much like the transitions and innovations in your own congregation, as a synod comprised of 112 congregations, mission starts, Lutheran agencies and institutions, we too said farewell and Godspeed to familiar leaders and welcomed the talent and leadership gifts of others.

In March, we gave thanks for the work of the Rev. Roger Hardy and the Rev. Dick Magnus, who completed six months of service in the shared role of Interim Director of Evangelical Mission. Two months later, we said farewell to Cyndi Berg, who had served as Office Manager for eight years. Like all who serve on the synod staff, these three colleagues helped us in our common work with efficiency and joy.

In May, we welcomed the Rev. Sharon Kelly to the synod staff in the brand-new role of Advisor to the Bishop on the Well Being of Children and Youth. Sharon connected school superintendents from the multiple districts in Chisago, Washington, Ramsey, and Dakota Counties to our conference deans and rostered leaders. Although she moved to Baltimore in late August to serve as the interim pastor of a city church, Sharon's work continues to influence the way we encourage congregations to interface with the needs of their neighborhood schools. Through tutoring partnerships, homework help, weekend food provision, after-school activities and more, we ELCA Lutherans are making a needed impact on the lives of all our children.

The Rev. Justin Grimm also joined the synod staff in May as the Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop for Next Generation Ministries. With ten years as a mission developer in Lake Ann, Michigan, Justin brings insight, courage, and supervisory skills to his work with our eight existing mission starts. In 2015, we also received approval to launch an outreach to the Oromo community in Saint Paul, an endeavor we pray will be well underway in 2016.

In August, Alicia Hillar assumed the role of Office Manager. With Spanish language skills honed during a year with the ELCA Young Adults in Global Mission in Mexico, she shares her bilingual gifts when they are needed. She joins the Rev. Justin Grimm, Julie Keefe, Chloe Ahlf, Greg Triplett, the Rev. Peter Harrits, the Rev. Lamont Koerner, Sister Noreen Stevens and Anna Grunner, as the staff serving with me in the synod office. In the fall of 2015, we welcomed Julia Hubbard as a two-year volunteer serving on behalf of the synod and ELCA Global Mission in Iringa, Tanzania.

As a synod, we gathered three times this past year. Conference Assemblies were held at Christ the King in New Brighton on February 28th. We sang and prayed together, and elected persons to serve in conference-level roles and as voting members of the 2016 Churchwide Assembly. We also worked on a communal art project, creating the artwork used at the Synod Assembly.

The Synod Assembly was held April 24-25th at Prince of Peace in Burnsville. There we deliberated on several memorials and elected additional persons to synod-wide offices and as voting members for the



upcoming Churchwide Assembly. The theme – *We Are Church: Here and Now* – came alive as we worshipped and were inspired by our keynote presenter, the Rev. Heidi Neumark from Trinity Lutheran Church in Manhattan. Throughout the two days we were called in fresh ways to the important work God is doing in and through us.

On six evenings in July and August, 150 members of the synod came together to help discern where and how God is calling us to be more deeply present in our world. Trinity, Lindstrom; Redeemer, White Bear Lake; Augustana, West Saint Paul; St. James, Burnsville; Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Roseville; and Arlington Hills, Saint Paul served as the hosts for those times of prayer, scripture study, singing, and faithful conversations about God’s intended future for our common work. The convictions lifted up in that visioning process are shaping our synodical work and budget in 2016 and 2017.

As a synod we welcomed seven new rostered leaders, who were ordained and welcomed into their first calls in the Saint Paul Area Synod in 2015. They included the Rev. Caroline Harthun, the Rev. Jill Rode, the Rev. Julie Wright, the Rev. Brandon Newton, the Rev. Jennifer Collins, and the Rev. Elizabeth Flomo. The Rev. Horacio Castillo was welcomed into the ELCA from the Iglesia Luterana Agustina de Guatemala.

Financial mission support from your congregation allows us to work with congregations in transition, support those in the candidacy process, and directly fund the work of Luther Seminary, Lutheran Campus Ministry, Lutheran Advocacy – Minnesota, the Minnesota Council of Churches, and Agora. By sharing 47.5% of that financial support with the ELCA, our congregations and synod are invested more broadly in our church’s work in global mission, in starting new congregations and renewing existing congregations, and in disaster relief. Among those benefitting from that support are six members of our synod, serving with Young Adults in Global Mission. They include Ryan Berkas and Jessica Moes (Cambodia), Renee Labat (Argentina), Maridith Lewellyn (United Kingdom), Sarah Olson (South Africa), and Brynn Wiessner (Madagascar). Gloria Bengsten is also serving as a global mission volunteer in Bratislava.

During 2015, this synod contributed \$6,793 to the ELCA’s Malaria Campaign (with total synod contributions to date of \$25,342), \$44,071 to ELCA World Hunger Appeal and another \$24,827 to Disaster Relief through the ELCA. Through special offerings for the current mission starts in this synod, \$31,505 was received in additional support for outreach efforts within the synod.

During our summer visioning conversations, we read the story in Luke 5:1-11 of Jesus calling Peter to go out into the deep water. The weary fisherman is reluctant to return to his nets after a night of fruitless labor but he says, “Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.”

Time after time in 2015, we have found ways to step forward with similar faith. Thank you for being a faithful part of this church – here and now.

Yours in God’s service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patricia J. Lull". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and "J".

Patricia J. Lull, Bishop