



## Report of Synod Minister Rev. Linda Pedersen

### ***Formation, Formation, Formation***

The emphasis for this past year has been on formation, Christ is forming us and we are forming others in the world for God's preferred future. We do this through partnership with leaders like those on the Equipping Congregations Board, the Companion Synod Committee and the event planning teams like Equipping Congregations Day and the Church Staff Workers Retreat. We are blessed remembering that it is, *"God who has called you by name and we are His."* Isaiah 43:1, as we continue to provide opportunities for faith formation throughout our synod.



### **Equipping Congregations Day**

Even a major snow event could not derail the SW MN Synod Equipping Congregations Event at Vinje in Willmar in February with about 600 people (it could have been more like 750 without the snow and icy roads). People traveled from across the synod to attend this event featuring Dr. Dave Lose, Bp. Jon Anderson and 28 different workshops to equip the baptized in their callings to serve the mission of God in their communities. I am so grateful for the collaborate effort of the Equipping Congregations Board and a great planning team working alongside with the congregations of the Willmar area to make this event a holy time for our synod.

### **Church staff Workers Retreat**

This annual event in September drew the largest number of participants than in years past. The attendance was about 40 more than the consistent 120-125 that have participated for the last 10 years. The keynote speaker was Dr. Rich Melheim and we gave each attendee a copy of his recent book, about FAITH5. Wellness was the theme in the afternoon with speaker Dr. Brian Boen. Another key feature was the free chair messages that are offered as part of this retreat day. This retreat day is planned by a group of lay church workers and is appreciated as a day of education and support. It might have been the free book or the emphasis on faith formation, or maybe even the positive energy that seems to be continuing fuel ministry throughout the Southwestern Minnesota Synod. Or maybe it was all these reasons and more. Either way it was another great day in our synod.

### **Faith5 training**

The momentum for an emphasis on formation in our synod continued as congregations and individuals focused on faith formation in their daily life, especially in their homes, after Rich Melheim spoke at the Church Staff Workers Conference. In March, he did two follow-up events (Marshall and Spicer) around an emphasis on Faith5. The core of this faith practice is **SHARE, READ, TALK, PRAY and BLESS**. More than 300 people comprised of households



with small children to older adults packed the fellowship hall at Faith Lutheran in Spicer to practice a way of engaging God's story by sharing our daily highs and lows, reading God's story, reflecting, praying and ending with blessing each other. This is a simple practice that could change the life of Christian households throughout our synod and beyond.

### **Companion Synod Partnership with the South-Eastern Diocese of Southern Africa**

Our relationship with our companion synod continues to grow. In September the Watonwan River Conference sponsored five visitors from the Shiyane Circuit. The conference did an excellent job of making sure the guests were given a variety of opportunities to visit in the congregations and have conversations about the assets they both bring to this partnership. The visit was planned so these visitors could also be a part of the Fall Theological Conference that provided a blessing for all our rostered leaders. Also in this time period the Minnesota Valley Conference sent eight visitors to the Vryheid Circuit with Dean Katherine Rood. Visitor exchanges also happened with the Shetek, Prairie and Lakeland Conferences during the past year. Our Companion Synod Committee made a decision to invite Bp. Buthelezi and his wife to be our guests at the 2015 Synod Assembly.

### **Equipping Congregations Board**

Our Equipping Congregations Board is doing some development by reading "Faith Formation in 2020" by John Roberto. The ministry of faith formation is continuing to change. The board is exploring what that means for the work of our synod board. We know the message is not changing, but the delivery systems for faith formation are expanding. This is an exciting time to explore how our synod can network to deliver learning and faith development opportunities to those inside and outside the congregations. This could include adding webinars, online devotions and other linked resources.

### **Conference and Call Process Ministry**

Another part of my work includes call process for the Crow River, Glacial Ridge, Great River and Lakeland Conferences. Although the number of congregations engaged in pastoral transitions is much smaller than the 55 openings that existed 10 years ago when I began working in SW MN, I continue to enjoy my ministry with our conference relationships and transitions with pastoral calls.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve with you in our Southwestern Minnesota Synod.



# Report of Synod Minister

## Rev. Joyce Piper

*“May all of my joy be a faithful reflection of you.  
May the earth and the sea and the sky join my song.  
Lord Jesus, I’ll praise you as long as I journey.” (ELW 808)*

### **Growing leaders in SW MN Synod**

One of the most exciting times of the year in my work is in the spring when seminary seniors are assigned to synods for their first calls. We have been so blessed to receive eight new seminary graduates this spring (photo below). Jackie Cook, Lowell Krogstad and Erik Rundquist will complete their pastoral studies at Wartburg Seminary by June. Kaitlyn Ferguson, Micah Pearson, Kris Isder, Amy Swenson and Ann Zastrow are coming to us from Luther Seminary. These new servants of Christ in our midst bring wonderful gifts for ministry with a variety of prior experiences and careers both local and global. Many have served in rural internships or have other rural experience.



We are grateful for internship sites in SW MN Synod that give candidates-in-information a foretaste of what pastoral ministry might soon become for them after seminary graduation. John Guthridge, Amy Hanson, Diane Hatman and Nathan Luong have been serving respectively at Grace in Dawson, First in St Peter, Christ the King in New Ulm and Prairie Star Ministries in the Windom area during this academic year. It sometimes happens that interns in SW MN later return to serve with us as pastors as well. We are also especially pleased to welcome back candidates from SW MN who do their internships elsewhere and come home to serve as pastors in our synod.

Our **First Call Theological Education** program supports pastors and other rostered leaders in their first three years of parish ministry. There are about 25 pastors serving in their first call in our synod. The beginning years of ministry often set the tone of expectations in one’s pastoral vocation, for better and for worse. It is important that pastors young in their calls have trusted colleagues and mentors with whom they can share their ministry joys and challenges. First Call pastors meet in monthly gatherings of about 5 colleagues, convened by a veteran mentor pastor. Our mentor pastors include: Pr. Art Wiese, Pr. Dan Bowman, Pr. Steve Rasmussen, Pr. Gene Alms, Pr. Joyce Graue, and Pr. Kathy Skoglund.

Special thanks to Pr. Margaret Yackel-Juleen who coordinates the First Call Program and Pr. Cole McCormick who assists in First Call annual retreat planning.

**First Call Family Camp: “Living Stewardship”** For our annual retreat this year we have invited our new seminary graduates and all First Call Pastors in Southwestern Minnesota Synod to participate in a 5-day family camp (July 27 - August 1, 2014) with morning adult workshops focusing on “Living Stewardship in the Community of Faith.” This extended retreat time for First Call Pastors with educational workshops on wholistic stewardship is being offered for the first time this year in SW MN Synod. The family camp focused on living stewardship shall be offered once-every-three-years (48-hour retreats offered with other ministry topics in the other two years) as part of our First Call Theological Education Program. All First Call Pastors (and their spouses) in our synod shall have the opportunity in this week-long setting to reflect deeply on and receive tools for the stewardship of their lives of service at the beginning of their ministries. SW MN Synod has on average 30 first call pastors. We carry a strong commitment regarding the formation of our First Call Pastors as lifelong, faithful leaders. A grant application for this event was submitted to the Stewardship of Life Institute (SOLI) which promotes stewardship in the ELCA.

**Candidacy and Seminary Scholarships:**

We have about 25 candidates in formation process towards ordained, Associate in Ministry, and diaconal ministry rosters. A regional candidacy conference is held each October at Luther Seminary to gather candidacy committees and staff persons from our 9 synods in Region 3. Information is shared about ongoing developments in candidacy process to promote consistency in candidacy practice throughout the region.

Fund for Leaders Scholarships for advanced seminarians in academic year 2013-2014 were granted to:

**LMM Scholarships:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Award</b>	<b>Seminary/year</b>
Lowell Krogstad	\$5600.	Wartburg Seminary/senior
Kent Krumwiede	\$5600.	Luther Seminary/senior

**SW MN Fund for Leaders Scholarships:**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Award</b>	<b>Seminary/year</b>
Bailey Landa	\$5000.	Luther Seminary/senior
Andrew Yackel	\$5000.	Luther Seminary/senior

An anonymous donor generously gave \$30,000 for SW MN seminarians in fall 2013, after previous annual donations of \$5000, \$15,000 and \$25,000 respectively. What an amazing legacy of generosity! Nine seminarians received grants ranging from \$1500 to \$5000 in December 2013 depending on anticipated tuition costs for spring 2014.

Debt Reduction grants of \$500 each were given in October 2013 to 25 SW MN pastors serving full-time in 2012 who were still repaying seminary student loans; 5 part-time pastors received lesser amounts. These grants totaling \$13,395 came from our Synod Fund for Leadership Support.

The Women of the ELCA in Minnesota Valley Conference gave a \$1500 scholarship, received by Susan Christianson of Christ Lutheran, Glencoe. Susan begins her seminary studies fall 2014.

We are grateful for the vision and generosity of donors who continue to support the cost of seminary education for our rostered leaders.

January 6, 2014 marked the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of my call to serve in the SW MN synod office. I am deeply grateful for another year of serving together in this special place and time. It is indeed a privilege to serve together with you all in Jesus' name.





# Report of Synod Minister

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## Rev. Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl

My work in the past year has focused on 4 Cs and a big N! Now in my third year of service as the Synod Minister for Networking, the N has to be capitalized. It stands for Networks.

### **Networks:**

The PSST Retreat – Pastoral Staff Support Time was held on April 25 – 26 at St. Andrew's. Working on Healthy Relationships was the focus this year. Pr. Al Negstad from the Minneapolis Area Synod facilitated conversation as pastoral teams (or individuals) shared about manageable relationship habits that will enhance their work together. The PSST event is one we hope to keep hosting with different foci each year so that our pastoral staff teams get together with other colleagues and experience encouragement for their work. The dates have been set for 2015: April 16-17, at Green Lake. The topics and speaker are being worked on. If you serve with other pastors in your setting, please mark the dates on your calendar, and join the Pastoral Staff Support Time Network.

Other networks continue to provide needed support and cross-pollination across the synod in things like conference meetings; pastoral text studies; Equipping Day events and workshops; ministerial groups in towns and areas; and even the Synod Assembly itself. We learn and grow by being together, and networking our faith as well as our experiences.

### **Constitutions:**

I serve as the staff liaison to the committee for Policies and Procedures of the Synod Council. They are a hardworking group, and always leave our meetings with 'homework' which can be complex and time-consuming, so we want to acknowledge their efforts with reviewing constitutions. Currently we are working with approximately 25 congregational constitutions. We also work on 'helps' for congregations as they take on this important task locally. Please check out the helpful documents posted on the SW Mn Synod website as you begin to update your constitution in your congregation. This is an important and time-sensitive project to undertake, but very important to have this missional document ready to serve you as you go forward in ministry.

### **Resource Center:**

Work on renovating the Resource Center has continued through the past year. I think you would notice right away the new paint job, the clean carpet, and the new arrangement of the room. These updates will facilitate groups meeting and enhance our opportunity to show hospitality to guests at the Synod office. I am grateful to many helpers, and our staff, for working on the new space. It is a team effort. More sorting of resources remains to be completed. I want to remind you all that the Resource Center has Resources! You may check them out for use in your congregation or for your personal growth. Now that it has had some updating, I think you will find it even more helpful in supporting you in teaching the faith. Please stop in and check it out!

### **Campaign:**

We will be hearing an update on the Synod's Campaign at this Synod Assembly. I have been working on forming an Advisory Team for the preparation stages of this effort. We've got thoughtful work and listening ahead of us as we take purposeful next steps on the Campaign path. What are the critical needs we want to address with extra resources? What are the strengths that we bring to this effort as a Synod? How will we navigate the challenges that come with any big project? These are the questions we may be asking as we continue to discuss and refine what our Synod's Campaign may entail. It's an interesting process and a very exciting one, and holds promise for our future. That future is in God's hands. God promises a future filled with hope (Jeremiah). A Synod Campaign will certainly assist us as we journey into that promise.

**Call process:**

I enjoy being involved in installations for the congregations I have been involved with through our call process. An installation is a happy time where pastor and congregation celebrate their hope for the future, and their assurance that God is leading them together in mission. It's a time in congregations when new chapters begin, and perhaps a key time when we all sense the call of God through our Baptisms to lives of service and witness. A time of renewed commitment to the common mission we are part of. I am grateful for the continued opportunity to be part of that type of celebration in congregation's lives.



## Director for Evangelical Mission

### Rev. Larry Streng

*Paul writes, "I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to live a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness....bearing with one another in love." Ephesians 4*

In January 2014 I intentionally began work on my brain function, practicing brain elasticity exercises through "Lumosity." Their tag line is, "Discover what your brain can do." I think about that tag line--and Paul's word to the Ephesians posted above--as I reflect on this year of "**formation**" in our SW MN Synod. We are a people whose brains--and hearts--are constantly being trained for serving in God's world as we live lives worthy of the callings to which we have been called. It is exciting to think and pray about: What "practices" are we doing together in our training for the calls God is giving us, as the Holy Spirit daily **forms us** as a children of God (+)?

I consider walking with people, especially through the practice of prayer, an important part of my call as the Director for Evangelical Mission (D4EM) and in my own development as a child of God. "I don't know if we ever get good at prayer," says Eugene Peterson (author *The Message*). Since 2006 I've continued my "Daily 5" practice--different than Rich Melheim's **Faith5** (SHARE, READ, TALK, PRAY, BLESS). It's a practice of praying five times daily (awakening +, dawn/breakfast, noon, dinner, and bedtime +). It continues to be a rich faith practice in my life. My Daily 5 grew when I attended a training at River of Hope/Hutchinson. Bill T-B encouraged us, "Ask on a daily basis: "How may I pray for you?" I've added this practice to numerous missional and relational conversations. They've happened on airplanes, phone calls, and in a variety of other settings. Sometimes the response is shocking. (MSP car rental center!) Most have ended with a rich--sometimes deeply emotional--time of prayer.



This latest prayer practice was incorporated into the life of our synod's pastoral and support staff team was on Ash Wednesday and in Holy Week 2014. Early on Ash Wednesday an email was sent to all rostered leaders. The message offered gratitude for each leader's service in our synod. It also asked, "How may we pray for you today?" A similar message was sent during Holy Week. The non-confidential responses were shared in the synod "mission station" (office) break time as we prayed together. Each synod minister associated with that leader's conference offered a prayer. Then, the entire staff--Bishop, pastoral and support--lifted those persons/petitions before God. I consider it one of the most powerful moments in my calling in the past year, being part of this team praying together.

At least two times/year our ELCA's Churchwide/Chicago invites participation at gatherings that include fellow D4EM colleagues. In March 2014 we gathered to discuss issues re: Racial and Gender Equity. Finding that place in God's world where we are "just" with one another is a major goal of the Body of Christ. I spent time talking with Ron Duty who is with us for our Synod Assembly "Glocal," coming to offer a workshop on "Understanding our Neighbors." We have an increasing number of new neighbors who do not look like the dominant upper European ethnicities of most of our congregations. It will be a great joy to have Ron--as well as one of the talented Glocal musical groups be with us at our Synod Assembly.

Formation is happening out of our Serving in God's World (SIGW) board! Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl and I share leadership with elected, called and appointed persons from our synod. We explore some of what God is doing in this SW MN Synod. And we try to respond in ways we are called to serve. New starts --as well as the more dominant renewal, transformational, or re-vitalizing ministry in our synod's congregations--is part of our SIGW meetings. A lot is happening! At our synod assembly we will welcome the new start developing in Montrose, MN--House of Grace. Additionally, we are seeking interest on both Latino and Laotian ministry initiatives in our SW MN Synod. Working with the Mpls Area Synod and leaders in the St Cloud area we are working on a Laotian ministry in the St Cloud area. Additionally, Hector Carasquillo,

program director for ELCA Latino ministries, met with leaders of Paz y Esperanza/Willmar to review the significant ministry done through Paz in Willmar. We hope to expand our Latino ministry in places throughout our synod. Hector will meet leaders from some of our Synod's communities on June 24<sup>th</sup> to discuss ways to be invitational among this growing population.



Another area of calling for me is the area of stewardship. Often people think money when they hear this word. It is so much more! It is how we manage--or "steward" --all that God gives to us. We live as stewards of God's Grace managing money as well as our bodies, minds, emotions and spirit. It is easy to be overwhelmed by all that comes at us each day. How good it is to "stop" once in a while to offer prayers of gratitude.

One of my gratitude's is that our synod was the first synod to ever reach the 65%+ completion goal of doing the Mayo Clinic's "Health Assessment" (HA) by the end of February! Over 77% of our Synod rostered and lay leaders who have Portico's ELCA Health Insurance responded! We are leaders in our ELCA! As this report is submitted that percentage is over 80%, still highest in our ELCA! Stewardship of our whole being is important. Our SIGW board formed a Wellness Team to invest the Wellness Dollars our synod earned in 2013 (\$25,000). Congregations received a 2% reduction in health care premiums throughout our synod--worth \$51,000 in 2014--because of the 65%+ results reported above! Using 2013 Wellness dollars, the Wellness Team formed several ways to invest in leaders using this additional 1% rebate. Opportunities include trying a Spiritual Director or personal renewal time. Several couples will attend a special Lutheran Marriage Encounter, one not on a weekend! Also, we have a First call Family camp at Green Lake. These new leaders will learn good financial stewardship practices valuable for a lifetime!



Let me close with dessert. ☺ PIE. In the USA \$20 Trillion will be given to next generations between now and 2020! "P.I.E.: (Prosper-Invest-Endow): A Recipe for Generosity" events within our synod are helping generous persons make plans for their "living stewardship," one that grows families and communities. Participants learn the value of story and discover ways to be generous. Jim Schade (Lutheran Planned Giving of SD) shared a revealing insight! "We spend 40+ years of our life accumulating, 10+ years of our life preserving, but we spend 2½ hours or less planning our distribution." PIE addresses this so persons can be more generous while saving money in taxes, increasing joy in families, and more!

I am grateful for your prayers. My health remains under review, living with lymphoma that remains without symptoms. And as a family we continue to care for our eldest son, Dan, and his fight against Chronic Fatigue Immune Disorder. I have appreciated the flexibility and support shown in a variety of ways over this year. Thanks be to God for each of you, part of our SW MN Synod, a part of Christ's Body, being formed together in our callings to serve as the Holy Spirit opens opportunities for us today.





# Report of Synod Vice President Gwen Arneson

## SYNOD COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

This Synod Assembly invites us into the story of the disciples' encounter with Jesus on the road to Emmaus where, in the text, the travelers and Jesus, alike, ask the question, "What things have happened?" Although this Assembly report comes in a different context and time, it is good to reflect on "what has happened" in your Synod Council and Executive Committee. Always, our work is accompanied by our prayers that Jesus will be made known and that God's glory will be revealed through our deliberations and actions. We are grateful for the countless ways council members have given of their time and resources, and look forward with joy to receiving the gifts of council members newly-elected to join us on the road and serve in this capacity.

Looking back, we note many highlights and topics of conversation, in addition to the more routine matters of business with which the council is entrusted:

- Deepening our times of Synod Council development at our regular meetings using SOAR (Strengths, Opportunities, Assets, and Results) and other tools for growth and evaluation
- Learning in greater detail about our partner ministries through conversations and presentations
- Approving sabbatical time for Bishop Jon Anderson during the summer of 2013
- Completing the review of our Governance structure as required by our constitution, and making recommendations for other constitutional changes regarding the process for electing a bishop in our synod
- Regularly hearing about the work and activities being done in our ten conferences as reports are brought to the council meetings; and bathing our council meetings in prayer as the requests of our members are lifted up throughout the meetings
- Recommending the support of Jay Beech's Worship Center initiative with financial funding in the next two years to allow musicians to be trained well in worship leadership skills
- Being grateful for the insights shared by our advisory members, Pr. Joyce Graue and Oliver Thul who serve with voice and vote on the ELCA Church Council
- Working successfully to achieve greater clarity and transparency in our financial reporting and recording
- Recommending the Gold Plus level of insurance coverage for synod staff members as changes were made in health care options
- Overseeing the renovation of the synod's Resource Service Center with a vision for its ongoing use and purposes
- Meeting our newly-assigned seminarians and presenting them with signed Bibles as they begin their calls
- Being in conversation with synodical leaders from the other five Minnesota synods about shared concerns and collaborative funding opportunities
- Reshaping our council meetings to work more effectively in our three standing committees, Policies and Procedures, Management and Mission, and Servant Leadership
- Assigning council members the names of congregations to contact regarding mission support intents for the coming year
- Authorizing the exploration of a process of "deep listening" in our congregations, staff, boards and committees in the months to come
- Celebrating our involvement as God's work is leading us into new and redeveloping ministries

With gratitude and joy for the privilege of serving together with all of you,

Gwen Arneson, Vice President, Southwestern Minnesota Synod

# Report on the Disposition of 2013 Synod Assembly Resolutions

*The full text of these resolutions can be found on the synod's website.*

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## **Resolution 13.01 - Regarding Our Synod's 25th Anniversary Appeal**

This resolution was adopted to explore the synod's opportunity to develop a capital campaign in partnership with the ELCA's 25th Anniversary Appeal. The appeal will invite gifts to our endowment funds and other programs of congregational and leadership renewal. A tithe (10%) of all the non-designated gifts will be shared with our companion synod, the Southeastern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in South Africa. The synod council will continue to develop this strategy for increasing the financial support of our synod, our churchwide expression, and our mission to God's world.

## **Resolution 13.02 – Regarding Southwestern Minnesota Synod Constitutional Change for Election of a Bishop**

This resolution was passed for the first time and will be presented for a second vote at the 2014 Synod Assembly to amend S9.04 of the synod's constitution. The current language of S9.04 was deleted and replaced with the following: "The bishop shall be elected by the Synod Assembly in accordance with the process specified in the bylaws and continuing resolutions." If this constitutional amendment passes in 2014, continuing resolution S9.04.04 regarding the bishop election process will be introduced.

## **Resolution 13.03 - Regarding Southwestern Minnesota Synod Constitution Bylaws and Continuing Resolutions for Election of a Bishop**

This resolution was passed to amend the synod's constitution, bylaws and continuing resolutions regarding the process for nominating candidates for the office of bishop. Rules begin with the preparation of a slate of nominees for consideration by the conference assemblies, continue with further conference nominating and voting procedures, and conclude with an explanation of the duties regarding nominee forums and other means of becoming acquainted with the nominees.

## **Resolution 13.04 - Regarding the Transfer of St. Paul Lutheran Church, Lowry, to the SW MN Synod**

This resolution was adopted to approve the transfer of St. Paul Lutheran Church of Lowry, Minnesota, from the Northwestern Minnesota Synod to our synod, to welcome them, and to give thanks to God for the new partnership we share with this congregation and its members.

## **Resolution 13.05 - Regarding Support of Legislation Prohibiting Employment Discrimination on the Basis of Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity**

This resolution was adopted to memorialize the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to call upon the United States Congress to pass legislation that would prohibit employment discrimination on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity while providing for religious exemptions; to urge church leaders to speak publicly in support of such legislation; and to urge ELCA members to make this position known to their members of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate.

## **Resolution 13.06 – Calling for Conversations about Ministering to Same-Gender Couples and Families**

This resolution was adopted to memorialize the 2013 ELCA Churchwide Assembly to invite and encourage conversations regarding the trend in state and federal laws towards marriage equality and how all the expressions of the ELCA can respond to the needs of the neighbor; about ways this church can advocate for equal protection under the law for same-gender couples and their families; and to make provision for voting members to engage in these conversations at the 2016 ELCA Churchwide Assembly as the church continues to discern its ministry in the emerging context.

## **Resolution 13.07 – Regarding Immigration Reform**

This resolution was adopted to support comprehensive and just immigration reform that includes a means of acquiring citizenship. The synod's bishop was directed to inform the Minnesota members of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives of this action and to urge their support.

# Youth Ministry

## *Journey with Jesus*

“At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him.  
Luke 24:30, The Message

That moment - when people recognize Jesus among us - is one of the greatest joys of youth ministry. As youth ministers (volunteer, paid, rostered, non-rostered) we walk on the road with young people. We walk carrying the joys and sorrows of our present circumstances. And Jesus walks with us. When we truly see that Jesus is with us and for us our lives are changed.

I have been blessed to witness these open-eyed, wide-eyed moments for over 13 years as your Youth Ministry Coordinator. I am truly blessed to be a part of gatherings with youth, education with adults, and equipping with congregational leaders. Here are a few things I lift to your attention this year.

### **Preventing and Responding to Abuse**

I have learned that 1 in 5 people are abused. As congregations we have a responsibility to prevent abuse within the ministries we shepherd. I've put together 4 steps you can follow to prevent and respond to abuse in your congregation. In addition, I'm gathering resources that will help pastors and youth ministers to walk alongside children, youth and adults who have been victims of abuse. [http://www.swmnelca.org/preventing\\_responding.html](http://www.swmnelca.org/preventing_responding.html)

### **Practice Discipleship**

Grow deeper in your knowledge and practice of youth ministry through online webinars and in-person trainings. We have a team of youth ministers who will come to your context to teach any of the following courses: Framing Youth, Framing Failure and Forgiveness, Framing Community, Framing the Vision, and Framing the Path.

Oh, and thanks to the ELCA Youth Ministry Network and the ELCA Youth Gathering, the courses are free! Contact our synod's Practice Discipleship Coach, Pastor Kathleen Ulland-Klinkner to schedule your Practice Discipleship experience. [prkathleen@embarqmail.com](mailto:prkathleen@embarqmail.com) 507-375-4792

### **Youth Ministers in Congregations**

Young people need adults who walk on the road with them as they discover Jesus. Our synod is full of these adults, both paid and volunteer. God is doing amazing things through you. Thank you.

### **The SW MN Synod Lutheran Youth Organization**

This board of 15 youth and 10 adults serves as a leadership lab for young people who want to grow in faith and share God's love. They work hard to create youth gatherings that will open the eyes of youth to Jesus in their midst.

### **Jr. and Sr. High Youth Gatherings**

Youth gatherings planned and coordinated by the SW MN Synod Lutheran Youth Organization are super events where the love of Christ is proclaimed with creativity and joy. Gathering participants particularly appreciate Faith Talks shared by youth, Christian music and service projects.



### **Youth Worker Retreat**

Our annual retreat this fall was titled “Show Me Jesus” and featured creative worship ideas facilitated by Pastor Laura Aase and Jim Nelson from River of Hope Lutheran in Hutchinson.

### **SW MN Synod 30 Hour Famine**

A group of youth ministers plan a 30 Hour Famine experience for youth in our synod. This October, youth fasted, slept outside and participated in activities, discussion and worship that opened their eyes to hunger at home and around the world.

### **Youth and Family Ministry E- Newsletter**

Please join our mailing list to receive bursts of information on events, resources, education, and more regarding youth and family ministry. Go to [www.swmnelca.org](http://www.swmnelca.org) to join.

### **SW MN Synod Youth Ministers Facebook Group**

When youth ministers have a question for their colleagues or want to share news of an upcoming event, they often turn to our synod’s youth minister Facebook group. If you’re a youth minister in our synod, please know this is a resource for you. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/swmnsynodyouthministers/>  
Thank you for journeying with Jesus and journeying with youth!

In Christ,

Sarah Hausken, Synod Youth Ministry Coordinator

