



**Boldly living out Christ’s mission by...  
+ engaging leaders + equipping congregations + and serving in God’s world...**

## Annual Report – Bp. Jon Anderson – 2014 – Formation

*After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where he himself intended to go. He said to them, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest. Go on your way. See, I am sending you out like lambs into the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and greet no one on the road. Whatever house you enter, first say, “Peace to this house!” ... whenever you enter a town and its people welcome you, eat what is set before you; cure the sick who are there, and say to them, “The kingdom of God has come near to you.”’* Luke 10 - NRSV

**As a synod we continue to focus on the word, “formation.”** We continue to note and celebrate all the ways we can see that God has been forming us as the baptized, as congregations and as a synod. I invite you to focus on what God is up to



in you, in your family, in your community of faith and in God’s world. We know that the most important work of the Spirit is often hidden. We know it is easy to make mistakes as we seek to understand the presence and work of God in our lives. Yet we are confident that our Gracious God continues to call us, form us and send us to serve. So, we watch for signs of God’s forming and reforming grace. We are grateful for God’s many gifts.

God is not done forming us, forming you. God is not done with our church, we continue to be shaped and formed into the cross of Christ. God has a mission for this synod. God is forming us so that we all share a conviction that **“every baptized one is a minister, every pastor a mission director and every congregation a mission station.”**

The lesson from Luke 10 above has been a cornerstone text in many of our meetings this year as we ponder how God is making us, and all things, new in Christ. Jesus continues to form us like he formed the early apostles and then sent them ahead of him. I invite you to go back and read the text. Notice that God forms them by sending them two by two. God gives us the gift of companions in Christ and the community of faith. God trusts the early disciples and sends us out into a world that is full of challenges and dangers. When we are tempted to protect ourselves and gather more things to do our ministry, Jesus teaches the disciples then, and teaches us now, to travel light trusting in God. Jesus commands us to proclaim the peace that only God can give that we know most deeply in Jesus and his cross. This is our mission field and there is much to do as we seek to proclaim the peace of God to a troubled world, cure the sick, and proclaim the closeness of the reign/rule/kingdom of God in Christ Jesus.





God forms us for a mission that is both local and global. This year's assembly will be a Glocal Mission event. We will focus on the mission we are called to in our many vocations inside God's community and beyond the Church's walls in God's world in our neighborhood, state, country and around the world. We will have time to work on our theme, "**Journey with Jesus: Do you know what has happened?**" based on the Emmaus text from the end of Luke.

As you think about yourself, your congregation, your synod and churchwide expression it is important to remember that growth takes many forms in addition to numbers. We see signs of growth in people, leaders, congregations, our governance and our engagement with the mission field God has placed us in. Join me in celebrating and affirming growth prompted by God's Holy Spirit.

We are seeing signs that people are listening to God in scripture and prayer, listening to one another and listening to our context as they work on sorting out how to do ministry and mission in this time and in our many contexts. We see signs that our leaders are zooming out to get perspective and then zooming in as they make very specific plans. They are assessing how the environment is changing. Instead of getting lost in anxiety or lost in denial, we are seeing congregations plan, run experiments, evaluate and develop capacities they have not had before. This fall we had multiple events inviting people to think about how to engage in faith formation in this time and culture. We watched our leaders show up in significant numbers, learning, discussing, praying, discerning and then decided to try to new things trusting that our forming and reforming God would be with them. We are thankful for how they seek to be stewards of the Gospel in this time and our future. Our mission field is changing. We are not called to look back and turn into pillars of salt, but rather to follow God's pillar of cloud by day and fire by night through the wilderness of our time.



I wonder if we should get signs to put outside our synod office, congregation's buildings, our home and our institutions. If so the sign should say "Warning – God at Work." God is calling us to faith, calling us into the community that bears Jesus name in our baptism, called from death to life, called to conversion of our heart, mind and pocketbook, called to new life, called deeper into this world not to climb some ladder of salvation, called to wider awareness of God's Church and called to greater awareness as we live in the world. God is at work calling us to new life.

Your synod continues to **Boldly walk in Christ's Mission** of....

**Engaging Leaders** –We are thankful for all the new leaders God has called to serve in our congregations in all kinds of ways. We give thanks for all the congregations and synods who prepared the rostered leaders who have come to serve in our mission field with us. We are thankful we have been called to be a hothouse for leaders in God's Church.

**Equipping Congregations** – We are thankful for all the ways God has been inspiring and encouraging congregations in their proclamation of God's grace, to receive the gifts of newcomers. We are particular thankful for the courageous redevelopment work happening in our new area parishes and congregations who have created alliances. It takes faith to trust God will lead you into new ways to be and do church. We see faithful and fruitful congregations trusting and following Christ into God's preferred and promised future.

**Serving in God's World** – We are formed to love and serve God and love our neighbors. That work takes place in our everyday life and many callings and beyond our communities. We dream of "Equipping the Saints: Realizing our Dream." We will be sharing more about our invitation to share God's work. We have been listening and learning. God is calling us forward to steward the Gospel in Southwestern Minnesota, our state, our region, our country and God's world.

*Bishop Jon V. Anderson*