

## **SYNOD COUNCIL AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT for the 2015 SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

### **We Are Church Together – We Are One in Mission**

As elected leaders in the governance of your synod, we are grateful for the partnership we have with all the baptized in the SWMN Synod and beyond to work together in the mission we have from God. It is a privilege to serve in this capacity, and we ask for your ongoing prayers for this important work as we are indeed, “Church Together.” Just as you find in the rhythms of your daily work, there are also anticipated routine matters addressed by your Synod Council throughout the year. For us, that includes roster matters, congregational constitutional review, treasure hunting for and making appointments to boards and committees, and stewarding financial and human resources to the best of our ability.

Since the 2014 Synod Assembly, your Synod council and Executive Committee have engaged in a variety of conversations and actions with the common prayer that our work will be fruitful, done to the glory of God, and build up the body of Christ in this place, including:

- Using a board exercise tool to teach us about energy and satisfaction where we discovered that we had Transformational Board capacity for visioning and putting into action ideas that would help move us into the future.
- Supporting the formation of a new start congregation in Montrose, MN, and voting to call Kimberly Swanson Buffie as the Mission Developer for the congregation; and receiving River of Hope in Hutchinson as a new congregation.
- Welcoming Jay Beech, from The Center for Worship and Music Studies, an endeavor supported by the SWMN, Minneapolis, and South Dakota Synods, to one of our meetings to teach us about this learning opportunity as it unfolds.
- Authorizing and beginning work on The Listening Project in our Synod, with assistance from consultant Rev. Jeff Kjellberg, KAIROS and Associates to sharpen our vision and help the synod’s leadership better understand our mission field, our areas for growth, our areas of strength, and discern our sense of priorities for the coming years. We also arranged for lay and rostered folks to come together in conversation and listening at Bishop Summits held in various locations.
- Working to continue to deepen our relationship with and learn from our Partner Synod – the Virginia Synod – as Bishop Jon Anderson and VP Gwen Arneson attended the Virginia Synod Assembly in May, 2014.
- Saying goodbye to a Synod Minister, Pr. Andrea DeGroot-Nesdahl as she retired at the end of 2014, and examining models and staffing options for Synod Ministry in the future.
- Arranging for the unfolding of the Bishop Election process for the 2015 Synod Assembly, and receiving feedback from the Synod Nominating Committee that is working to facilitate this process.
- Continuing to ask ourselves what we might consider to best align ourselves with the mission field in which we find ourselves as we listen to God, our neighbors, and our contexts.

With gratitude and joy,

Gwen Arneson, Southwestern Minnesota Synod Vice President