

Synod News gathers stories from previously-published e-newsletters of the NC Synod into a printed communication piece.



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A most blessed New Year to each of you!

As you read this, I am at Bishops' Academy (annual continuing ed. for bishops) and preparing for our January 9 synod-sponsored trip to the Holy Land. I want to share with you some re-visioning that our (mostly new since I took office 2 ½ years ago) synod staff has been praying and working on and that Synod Council is now pondering and tweaking and that will come to fruition in, we hope, increasingly tangible ways in this new year.

First of all, we have four main points of vision/priority we want to lift up and pursue in virtually all that we do.

- Cultivate and celebrate vital congregations
- Identify, equip, and nurture whole and healthy leaders
- Embrace and engage in collaboration
- Proclaim the promise of the resurrection with a prophetic voice

As we pursue that vision and those priorities for what we believe to be a synod, I want to highlight some synod staffing shifts:

Leadership Development: Tammy Jones West has been on our staff for a long time and has been rostered as a deacon for several years. She will be leading our convergence and expansion of the "Leadership School"

and "Leaders Learn" projects. At last month's Synod Council meeting Tammy received a call to serve officially as an Assistant to the Bishop, given her gifts, her tenure, and her increasing responsibilities.

Conflict: It used to be that Diane Ryan, that winsome and helpful voice that usually answers the phone at the synod office, was instructed, upon notification of a conflict in a congregation and/or with a rostered minister, to direct sexual misconducts to Beth and all other conflict to Phil. With Beth now retired, and realizing that one person's responding to most conflict as a "silo" is depressing and inefficient, we plan to manage conflict as a larger bishop's staff, depending on situation, location, availability, etc. That is to say that Sara, Phil, Danielle, Tammy, and I are all being trained together to assess and respond to conflict/crisis situations in the synod. Often we will work in teams, which we have always done in the case of sexual misconduct situations. We will also process conflict situations as a team, much like we handle call process as a team with Sandra, Phil, me, and sometimes Danielle and Sara.

Assembly: Since Tammy will be taking on more leadership, conflict, and general bishop's assistant roles, the huge task of planning and running assembly will be shifting to Michael DeNise, our Director for Finance and Administration. He will shadow Tammy for the 2018 assembly to learn the ropes, and in 2019 it'll be his baby.

Stewardship for all Seasons has done quite well in the 20 or so pilot congregations of the past two years, with an average increase in giving in those congregations of 15-18% annually. Synod Council called Pastor Mike Ward to oversee that program in as many of our congregations as possible. Please contact our Director of Evangelical Mission, Danielle DeNise, to learn how your congregation might participate.

Justice and Advocacy ministry has been solidified as Synod Council has recently called Deacon GeoRene Jones. This position is funded entirely by outside grants but will help us live into priority and vision #4 above.

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I realize this sort of information is not necessarily inspiring, but I will say that new personalities as well as clarity of vision and priorities are bringing new excitement, energy, and inspiration to our staff, and we are here to bring that excitement, energy, and inspiration to you.

As always, we are immensely grateful to all of our congregations for their Mission Support in 2017 that fuels the synod's collaborative ministries including Candidacy, Call Process, Campus Ministry, 9 stellar agencies and institutions, Leadership, Stewardship, Congregational Vitality, LYO, and countless other ways we are blessed to share as the NC Synod. In addition, as we forward more than \$1 million to the ELCA's churchwide organization, your gifts have far-reaching national and global implications for ministry—everything from Young Adults in Global Mission to Domestic Mission starts (seven in NC) and redevelopments (five in NC) to Worship Resources and so much more. The synodical and churchwide expressions exist primarily to help our congregations be more vital and our leaders (lay and rostered) be healthy and strong so that Gospel ministry might flourish!

Your partner in the Gospel,



Bishop Tim Smith

Youth who love like Jesus



Published, Synod E-News, March 20, 2018.

If you had walked into the Embassy Suites Hotel in Greensboro in late February for a relaxing weekend away, you might have been surprised to find approximately 500 youth and adults gathered for a weekend focused on how to Love Like Jesus. The eight youth who are the NC Synod's Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO) board planned, organized, and led the entire weekend (including the food menus) where they were the church together. There were large group gatherings, small group times, meals with new and old friends, amazing music (led by youth,) inspired worship, a blackout dance, and more. At every LYO Assembly, faith is shared, friendships are made, and there's plenty of fun.

For the fourth year in a row, the synod's Engage the Bible Task Force (formerly Book of Faith team) has sponsored "Tell It!," a video contest for congregational youth groups to re-tell a Bible story. The top five entries were chosen by the task group and sent to the LYO Assembly for a final vote where the top three win prizes. This year, St. Philip, Raleigh, won \$3000 for their version of "David & Goliath," Christ the King, Cary, won \$2000 for "Noah's Ark—Redone," and Macedonia, Burlington, shared "The Story of Utticus" for \$1000. The prizes are higher than normal during an ELCA Youth Gathering year and there were a record number of wonderful submissions this year; the decisions were tough.

Cathryn Hewett, Director of High School Ministries at St. Philip, Raleigh, shares this story about her youth and their first-place video, "Our youth met a couple of youth from Emmanuel, High Point, at Teens Encounter Christ in January and we were excited to see them again at LYO and especially in Emmanuel's video. When Emmanuel did not place in the "Tell It!" competition, our youth decided to share our winnings, understanding that Emmanuel has financial needs for the ELCA Youth Gathering as much as or more-so than we have. It



Save the date for these important events:

May 31 *Growing Young* (pre-assembly)
Raleigh

June 1-2 Synod Assembly
Raleigh

October 8-10 Fall Convocation
Lutheridge

Contact the synod office (704-633-4861) or watch our other publications (see p. 4) for more info.

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seemed like the right thing to do and was an easy and unanimous decision for us to make.” Wow! How generous! And, that story led to other winners also sharing so that all of the top five youth groups were awarded prize money.

At LYO Assembly and all across the NC Synod, there are youth who share generously, youth who lead well, youth who make beautiful music, youth who welcome, youth who share their story and God’s story, and youth who show up. There are youth who question and youth who answer, youth who cry and youth who comfort, youth who consume 123 pizzas in no time flat, youth who dance and youth who enjoy board games. Most importantly, there are youth who love like Jesus and youth who are the church together! Noah, a young man from Grace, Hendersonville, shared that he enjoys coming to the LYO Assembly each year because, “everyone is so friendly, caring, and accepting.”

Noah finds the friendly, caring, and accepting atmosphere a wonderful place to live out his faith and be nurtured in Christian community. It is, in part, your kindness through your gifts of Mission Support that helps equip and encourage youth through attending our synod’s LYO Assembly. You make this possible. You equip and encourage adults in your congregation to lead youth. You make it possible for youth and adults to attend LYO Assembly and other synod youth events. You provide role models for inviting, caring, accepting, loving, and giving. We are the church together!

*Thank you,
NC Synod, for
your generosity!*

NC Synod surpasses fundraising challenge for ELCA World Hunger

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What started as a conversation led to multiplying generosity among members of the North Carolina Synod.

In February 2017, a NC donor who asked to remain anonymous made a \$50,000 donation to ELCA World Hunger, a ministry of the ELCA which works in more than 60 countries around the world on solutions to end hunger and poverty.

The generosity didn’t end there, though; the donor wanted that gift to spur more giving, and after conversations between Bishop Tim Smith and ELCA World Hunger staff, it was decided that this gift could be used to start a challenge to the whole synod.

From April through June 2017, the NC Synod was challenged to raise another \$50,000 to double that gift. The results were impressive. In three months, the synod raised \$101,622 for ELCA World Hunger—more than doubling the challenge! The donor hoped the gift would leverage more generosity within the synod, and the results proved so. This represents 87 percent growth in giving from the NC Synod to ELCA World Hunger over the same three months in 2016.

The gifts will be used to support the work of ELCA World Hunger, which is designed to get at the root causes of hunger and poverty. Programs range from health clinics



to microloans, feeding refugee families to warm meals at a soup kitchen—all working toward a just world where all are fed.

In Memoriam

Since the fall issue of Synod News, the following rostered ministers or spouses have joined the Church Triumphant.

- The Reverend Timothy Glenham — 11/9/17
- The Reverend Steven Lorimer — 11/15/17
- Ethel Frick, widow of the Rev. Vernon Frick — 12/13/17
- The Reverend George Moore (12/22/17) and Elizabeth Moore (12/31/17)
- Helen Michael, widow of the Rev. Don Michael — 1/9/18
- Verna Cook, widow of the Rev. Edwin Cook — 1/19/18
- Dorothy Trexler, widow of the Rev. Bernard Trexler — 3/11/18
- The Reverend Clarence “Bud” Walck, Jr.— 4/13/18



Pastor Phil Tonnesen, Pastor Gilberto Quesada, Luis Zamora, María Obregon, and Bishop Tim Smith

Friends from Costa Rica

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In October, our synod was privileged to be host to a delegation of three from our companion synod, Iglesia Lutheran Costarricense (ILCO). The delegation consisted of Pastor Gilberto Quesada, President of ILCO, and lay members of ILCO, María Obregon and Luis Zamora. Pastor Quesada was making a return visit to our synod, but Obregon and Zamora were first-time visitors to N.C. and to the U.S.

The group began their visit in Kure Beach with Pastor Dan Keck (Kure Memorial, Kure Beach) who was host for that leg of the trip. Pastor Keck shares:

After two visits by groups in our congregation to Costa Rica to work with and learn about ILCO's ministry throughout their country, we were blessed to host them in Kure Beach this past October. Our time with Pastor Gilberto, Maria, and Luis was a wonderful opportunity for us as a church to continue strengthening our relationships with them as individuals as well as with the Lutheran Church of Costa Rica. It gave our congregation an opportunity to learn about how important our partnership with them is and how encouraging it is for both our ministries! Their visit also gave them an opportunity to get to know our community and the people that are a part of our ministry. The delegation also had a chance to visit with pastors from the South Coastal Conference as we shared about our ministries. They also visited the Kure Beach Faith Center, part of Agape+Kure Beach Ministries as well as Trinity Grove, one of the healthcare communities of Lutheran Services Carolinas.

Following time at the beach, the group crossed the state and joined the synod's rostered leaders at Fall Convocation at Lutheridge. Additional visits to the synod office,

Lenoir-Rhyne, Lake Hickory, and worship with Christ the King, Cary, filled the rest of their days. Assistant to the Bishop Pastor Phil Tonnesen coordinated the trip and was their host during much of their ten-day visit. Our synod was blessed by the visit of these friends—two brothers and a sister in faith! We look forward to continuing this special relationship with Iglesia Lutheran Costarricense.

Our friends shared these thoughts about their visit.

Pastor Gilberto Quesada: Thank you for the wonderful visit, hospitality, and time of relationship-building. We continue giving thanks to the God of Life for such a beautiful experience.

María Obregon: Thank you for such an incredible experience. I did not know how much alike we are in Costa Rica and in the United States. We are brothers and sisters.

Luis Zamora: It is so wonderful to know there are other churches like ours who care about the diversity community.

Editor's note

Synod News is a biennial publication of the NC Synod telling stories in print. For even more ways to connect, see below:

- **Synod E-News** (e-mail; twice/month)
- **Leader E-News** (e-mail; twice/month)
- **Special E-News** (e-mail; deaths, ordinations, special notes from the bishop, etc.)
- **Social Justice & Advocacy E-News** (e-mail)
- **Facebook** (NC Synod, ELCA is the name of our page. *Like* and *follow it* to see daily posts.)
- **Our website** www.nclutheran.org
- **Synod insert to *Living Lutheran*** (four times/year) Watch the center pages of your *Living Lutheran* magazine for this.

Please let me know if you'd like help connecting to any of these publications. 704-633-4861, x9574

Thank you! *Catherine F. Fink*

