



# Assistant to the Bishop Report to the Assembly

*Pastor Kenneth Sandlin*

It has been almost two years since I began serving as a halftime assistant to the bishop. It is a joy. It is a challenge. It is serving in a way that I truly love. I have worshipped with congregations in the East Central and West Central Conferences, bringing greetings from Bishop Roth and the entire synod staff. I have met so many devoted members as we visit over coffee after worship. I have grown to appreciate, even more, the vitality and the faithfulness of pastor and people as we sing and pray and share the presence of our Lord. And size doesn't matter. From large congregations to small parishes; from big city churches to white frame buildings surrounded by corn fields; the spirit of God is strong in the lives of those who gather.

There is joy and challenge in my work with the call process as well. I read through the list of congregations who are seeking a pastor and I wish we had nominees for all of them. I'm especially drawn to those congregations who have had a pastoral vacancy for one or two or even three or more years. I read through rostered leader profiles and the Bishop and I interview those who appear to be a good fit for one or more of our congregations. How easy it would be if our Bishop had the authority to say you go here and you go there. Soon every congregation would have a pastor. But that's not the way God's call works. I remind myself, and I remind the call committees with whom I work, that God is guiding us, leading us and maybe even pushing us to nominate and call the right pastor for the right congregation. It is challenging, that's true. And when it happens ... when pastor and people meet and share and grow in faith and service ... there is great joy and celebration. So be patient, those of you who are waiting for a pastor, God knows your needs and God is with you.

Candidacy is also filled with joys and challenges. As the candidacy committee walks with those who are preparing for leadership and service in the church, we are drawn to their journey. We hear their passion as they share their faith. We pray for them as they continue to discern God's call. Every time we have the opportunity to be present at an ordination, we joyfully celebrate God's call and the gifts God gives. We currently have five candidates in our synod who are taking seminary classes, on internship or doing additional graduate work. And we have two potential candidates who are preparing to be entranced later this year. That's wonderful. But I wonder, are there others? Maybe someone in your congregation feels a call from God, but needs encouragement to follow where that call leads. Could you be the one who provides that encouragement? It's a challenge that's extended to each one of us ...to see God's gifts in someone, and then to say to that person, "Have you thought about God's call to be a pastor?"

Joys and challenges come to all. I pray that the joys you know in the life God gives will fill you with wonder, thankfulness and praise. And I pray that the challenges you face in life will not be roadblocks, but welcomed opportunities to grow even stronger in your faith and your relationship with God. The spirit of God is strong in our synod. Thanks be to God.



# Assistant to the Bishop Report to the Assembly

*Pastor James Reents*

Greetings in this season of Pentecost!

This is my 5th Assembly as a quarter time Assistant to the Bishop. I am blessed to serve in this position and work with such a dedicated staff. Welcome to Pastor Maureen Stein. I live in Bloomington, so I am deployed staff and travel to the synod office once/month.

Pastors who desire to move fill out a Rostered Leaders Profile (RLP). I read and acknowledge those who indicate an interest in the C/SIS. I wish I had more RLP's to read. We need more pastors.

I relate to the Lay and Professional Leaders Support Subcommittee. We suggest the annual salary guidelines for rostered leaders in the synod. Portico Health Insurance has seen big increases in recent years, so we have suggested maintaining the guidelines which allows for an increase for years of service. The guidelines can be found in this assembly packet and on the synod website under Resources. Another benefit to pastors is the clergy renewal leave/sabbatical leave grant also found on the synod website.

I relate to eleven congregations in the Northern Conference and all 24 congregations in the Northeast Conference. 35 congregations are very manageable. I have visited all of these congregations in the hopes of strengthening the relationship between the congregations and the C/SIS. These visits have been warmly received. If there is a vacancy in any of these congregations, I conduct the "Initial Call Process" with the congregation council. I also attend monthly leaders meetings in both conferences.

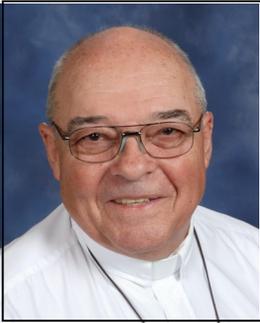
Much of our synod is rural. Rural communities are decreasing in size, therefore the need for congregations to work together. This is happening in two ways in the Northern and Northeast conferences.

The Three Saints Parish includes St. Mark LC, Chillicothe; St. Timothy LC, Wyoming; and St. John LC, Lacon. They have made great progress in working together to call a full-time and part-time pastor to fulfill their mission.

"Servants United" is the name of the possible Geographic Parish including the following congregations: Community, Cornell; Trinity, Chenoa; Trinity, Fairbury; St. Paul, Forrest; St. Peter, Dwight; St. John, Anchor; St. John, Sibley, and American, Gibson City. Delegates from these congregations have been meeting for over two years and are close to making a decision about participation. Thank you to Pastor Bob Dealey and Pastor Tom Krieger for their leadership. Our goal is to place mission above survival.

This year I'll, participate in "Pedal for a Purpose" for the 4th year. I have grown physically and spiritually through this experience. Through the years we have supported: Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, Lutheran Campus Ministry of Illinois, companion synods in Madagascar, and seminary debt reduction. Thank you for your prayers and support and the leadership of Pastor Adam Dichsen, Pastor Scott Egbers and Mr. David Poland.

May we continue to follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit in carrying out God's mission.



# Assistant to the Bishop Report to the Assembly

*Pastor Wayland Middendorf*

I serve as synod staff liaison for the Social Ministry, Justice and Advocacy Committee, the Global Mission Committee and the Synodically Authorized Ministry Subcommittee. Another area of responsibility is to visit congregations and conference gatherings in the Southern Conference and the I-70 portion of the West Central Conference. I also serve as the contact person for one closed congregation (Trinity, Alton) until the real property is disposed.

**Social Ministry, Justice and Advocacy** reviews grant requests and designates a monetary amount to each grant that is approved. The amount is based on the funds available, number of grants received that meet the criteria, the need and what the impact might be. The needs are many and we do our best to review and approve grants based on established guidelines.

**Global Mission Committee** is now participating in the monthly World Hunger Webinars. Bishop Roth, the chair of the Global Mission Committee and myself, have quarterly Web Ex conference calls with the other synods who also have companion synods in Madagascar and we annually meet at the Churchwide office to schedule visits and share information related to our companion synods. The committee has also been actively collecting the mission activity of the synod congregations and hope to have a list for the Synod Council and we hope to distribute that information to all congregations and pastors in the synod.

**Synodically Authorized Ministry Subcommittee** has made revisions to the S.A.M. Guidelines. The revisions are in the hands of the subcommittee members and we will meet in the next few weeks to approve those revisions and refer them to Bishop Roth for his approval and comments. These revisions will put us more in line with the ELCA guidelines for Synodically Authorized Ministry and improve the education program. Our Dean of Education, Pastor Blake Duncan and I continue to seek instructors for our classes and people who can lead retreats for continuing education. The education will end after the winter of 2017 class for a year and a half due to a lack of students.

I thank God for the opportunity to serve as an Assistant to Bishop Roth and I am grateful to all of you.



# Assistant to the Bishop Report to the Assembly

*Pastor Maureen Stein*

People of God in the Central/Southern Illinois Synod,

It has been a privilege to work as an Assistant to Bishop Roth and with the synod staff for this past year. With the move into the quarter-time position last June, I began to work with interim ministry situations in the synod. There is a continuous learning curve about the process of matching congregations in transition with the people resources available to serve those congregations. Interim agreements are written for six months at a time, providing regular opportunity for communication between the synod, interim pastors and those in Synodically Authorized Ministry, and congregational leaders. This April Bishop Roth and I hosted a gathering for rostered interim leaders to give direction and clarity for interim situations and to provide a way for those who have served or who are serving as interim pastors to connect with each other.

Bishop Roth and I work together on First Call Theological Education, the process of structured reflection on the first three years of ministry. First Call pastors meet every six months for three years, each time sharing reflections they have prepared on a topic related to the stage of their ministry. It is a joy to accompany new pastors as they grow in their understanding of their ministry contexts and of themselves in the call to servant leadership.

I also relate to congregations in the Northern and Northwest Conferences, attending Conference meetings and Assemblies and visiting in the congregations.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve God in this ministry.



# **ELCA Director for Evangelical Mission and Coordinator of Communications and Networking Report to the Assembly**

*Pastor Bob Dealey*

## **ELCA Director for Evangelical Mission**

As the Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM), I am the staff liaison to the Mission Support and Stewardship Education Committee (MSSEC) and the New and Renewing Congregations Committee (NRCC).

Since the 2015 synod assembly, the MSSEC has been busy providing resources to congregations to assist them with their ministry of stewardship. This happens in the following ways:

- ◆ Last year, 70 copies of the three-year stewardship resource entitled “First We Give of Ourselves” by Kurt Nordby were distributed to individuals and synod congregations. This year’s featured resource is “Embracing Stewardship” by Charles Lane and Grace Duddy Pomroy. Copies may be ordered at a reduced rate of \$10 each via the synod website ([www.csis-elca.org](http://www.csis-elca.org)) or at the MSSEC synod assembly display table.
- ◆ “The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Central/Southern Illinois Synod: Your Partners in Stewardship”, a 16-page resource, was developed and is now available for download at [www.csis-elca.org](http://www.csis-elca.org)
- ◆ “StewardTips”, a bi-monthly electronic stewardship resource, published its first issue in October, 2015.
- ◆ Doreen Klages serves as the Synod Coordinator for Mission Interpreters, a group of congregational volunteers who share stories about what the Church is doing on the congregational, synodical and churchwide levels. It is hoped that a Mission Interpreter will be recruited and trained for each congregation. Two training events are held each year in different parts of the synod. The next event will be held at Resurrection, Bloomington on Saturday, October 1, 2016.

The New & Renewing Congregations Committee (NRCC), through its Transformational Ministry sub-group, has offered a series of two training events in different conferences across the synod. The third session (in the series of four training events) will be offered October 8, 2016 at Prince of Peace, Mt. Vernon and October 22, 2016 at Peace, Springfield. Each training session is self-contained and congregations who have not yet participated in previous events are welcome to attend. There is no cost to participate in the training events, but a free-will offering is received to help defray the cost of lunch.

In addition, as the DEM, I have worked with the following groups of congregations:

- ◆ Atonement, Faith, and Luther Memorial Lutheran churches—all of Springfield, united to form a single congregation, Peace Lutheran Church and are involved in the process to call a pastor.
- ◆ Mt. Moriah, Anna and Salem, Jonesboro have entered into a yoked agreement and are involved in the process to call a pastor.
- ◆ St. Mark, Chillicothe; St. John, Lacon; and St. Timothy, Wyoming have entered into a ministry partnership agreement and are involved in the process to call a pastor.
- ◆ Seven congregations in the Northeast Conference are close to finalizing the arrangements for the formation of a geographical parish.

## **Coordinator of Communications & Networking**

The Central/Southern Illinois Synod webpage ([www.csis-elca.org](http://www.csis-elca.org)) is an excellent source of resources and information for individuals and congregations. Additions are made on a regular basis. Past issues of “Mission Matters...”, “For Your Consideration”, “Did You Know That...?” and “Steward Tips” are archived on the website.

Thank you to those congregations who send copies of their church newsletters (either electronically or by U.S. mail) to the synod office. The newsletters we receive are an excellent source of stories and articles for synod publications. If you do not do so already, please consider adding the synod to your newsletter distribution list.

A copy of a pre-assembly fill-in-the-blank sample press release is available on the synod website for use by congregations. The press release is designed to be customized for local usage in an effort to increase congregational visibility within the local community. Following the assembly, a brochure which includes information about the synod assembly is available on-line at [www.csis-elca.org](http://www.csis-elca.org)

The synod office is also contacted to assist with the promotion of events of interest to synod constituents, e.g. Pedal for a Purpose; the Campaign for the ELCA; synod-sponsored youth events; Women of the ELCA; etc. You may contact me at the synod office to see how we can assist you with your communications efforts. I am also available to assist congregations with the development of a communications strategy.

I appreciate the work of Dean Haucap, Chris Wollesen, Cindy Koonce, and Pastor Ken Sandlin as valued partners in our communications ministry. Their faithful service is invaluable.

You may send comments and/or suggestions about communications to me at [Bob.Dealey@csis-elca.org](mailto:Bob.Dealey@csis-elca.org) I am here to help you expand the communications work that you do. Thank you for the opportunity to serve you.