



# **Director of Evangelical Missions**

## **2020 Report to the Assembly**

**Pastor Elise Rothfusz**

As Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM), I am called to serve the Central/Southern Illinois synod in areas of congregational vitality, new ministries, and stewardship. There is overlap among these areas, but at its core, I see this position as growing disciples in congregations to better live out their calling to share the good news of Jesus Christ in their communities. A large share of my work this past year does fall in some general categories.

**Area ministries** – One of my responsibilities is to support and encourage opportunities for congregations to work together. As such I work with geographic parishes, coordinate conversations among and with congregations who are looking to have a greater impact with their ministry by working together with other congregations, and promote opportunities for congregations be resources for one another. This past year we saw the development of the Faith and Grace parish in the Northwest Conference, and the launch of the Seeds of Hope Cooperative, a group of six congregations who are raising up gifted disciples among them who can serve the smaller congregations as Synodically Authorized Ministers in the future.

**Stewardship** – I continue to be a resource for pastors and congregations as they consider how best to approach stewardship practices in their congregations. I have made presentations as well as done consultations with stewardship teams.

**Evangelism** – This past year I was asked by two congregations to host evangelism workshops (though the second one was cancelled due to shelter-at-home orders). I also serve on a DEM working group focused on evangelism and the development of new resources for congregations that we hope will be released within the year.

**Faithful Innovation** – The C/SIS is a recipient of a two-year synod vitality grant to begin something called Faithful Innovation Learning Communities. This process brings congregation teams together to practice listening to God, one another, and their neighbor through Dwelling in the Word together and trying out new practices and ways of thinking over a nine-month period. During the summer of 2019 I attended the Faithful Innovation Summit, and in January was able to take a synod team for training. We will complete our

training in June. While the launch of Faithful Innovation has been delayed due to the pandemic, the planning team expects the first congregations to begin in November.

Word and Sacrament Outposts and Congregational Vitality Event – I spent more time this last year in conversations and resources about ways our congregations might be able to plant new seeds of ministry and share the good news of Jesus with those who have yet to do so. In February I attended the Congregational Vitality Event for mission developers and synod teams. Three pastors and a lay person attended as well to think and begin initial planning for what starting a new ministry might look like. As with many things, adjustments are being made in planning due to the pandemic.

Committees – I relate to two committee, and am so thankful for those on the committees and all they have contributed toward the ministry of the synod this past year. The New and Renewing Congregations Committee put on Mission Mt. Vernon, a synod-wide mission trip to and with Prince of Peace Lutheran in Mt. Vernon. You can see that committee report for more details. The Mission Support and Stewardship Education Committee dedicated itself to plans for launching The Generosity Project in our synod. Unfortunately, that too has been postponed by the pandemic, but the committee is looking forward to continuing to promote generosity.

I have immensely enjoyed my Sunday visits to your congregations; thank you for your hospitality. If your congregation would like to engage more deeply in any aspect of discipleship and ministry, I am available as a resource person to help you think, plan, and move forward in what you hear God calling you to be and do in this time and place – in person or by video conference if necessary.

### **Report of the Congregational Resources Coordinator**

In addition to my  $\frac{3}{4}$  time role as Director for Evangelical Mission, I serve the C/SIS in the quarter-time position of Congregation Resource Coordinator. This position covers a number of areas:

- Coordinating with the Administrative Assistant for Media, Communications, and Graphic Design for synod newsletter and web content. With the resignation of Tucker Good in April 2019, I assumed the some of the duties that position. Until March 2020 when Brett Gosteli took up that position in an interim capacity, I published a bi-weekly synod e-newsletter and oversaw the creation of a new synod website.
- Making visits to rostered ministers who are new to our synod, providing them with an information packet and familiarizing them with aspects of our synodical life together.
- Assisting Bishop John in conflict situations as they arise.
- Serving as a resource person for family systems theory as it relates to congregational leadership. I am part of the ELCA Systems Academy and welcome your questions or interest in talking about how an understanding of systems theory can help both rostered ministers and lay leaders navigate the complexities of congregational dynamics.