



Southeastern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



2011 MINISTRY REPORT OF THE SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA SYNOD, ELCA

We are 176 congregations and four Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities working together in mission here in southeastern Minnesota, telling the story of salvation with passion and joy:

This fall over 400 members of this synod - both rostered and lay leaders - gathered at four events around the synod to **talk about mission**. These gatherings buzzed with contagious excitement as participants were guided through conversation about developing, carrying out, and evaluating mission in their communities. A lot is happening in our congregations, and the passion for ministry is invigorating.

Karen Gieseke began as the synod's new Children, Youth, and Family Ministry Coordinator in August 2011. She is sharing her passion for families with the congregations of this synod as she guides conversations in congregations about **developing new or re-imagining current family ministry**. She provides support for the varied ministries relating to families and the pastors, staff, and volunteers who work with them. The 2012 Synod Assembly will equip participants for all types of family ministries, including offering workshops to *all*, not just voting members.

Peace Lutheran Church in Eyota dedicated its new building on All Saints Day. Peace has been worshipping at a local school for the past ten years. They had land and some money, but they focused on **constructing their congregation before constructing their building**. The service of dedication was packed, truly a day of celebration.

A new worshipping community is thriving in Rushford. When Rushford Lutheran Church left the ELCA, a group of members wanted to stay and organized Trinity Fellowship. They continue to **seek what God might have in mind** for a determined group of disciples.

Five communities of African immigrants continue to worship in our synod, each in their native tribal language. All are building strong relationships with their host congregations. The goal is for each African ministry and host congregation to join as one congregation with much diversity. The Lutheran church has always been a church of immigrants. Now **we welcome the newest among us**.

Our synod's passion for ministry has expanded beyond southeastern Minnesota. We are also involved in ministry with the people of South Sudan. There is no Lutheran church body in that newly-organized country, but members of our synod have been among those from around the country meeting to help form such a body. In the meantime, our synod has **commissioned seven Sudanese seminary graduates to serve as lay ministers**. They will be ordained when a church is organized there.

In 2011, our companion synod, the Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, **celebrated 100 years of mission work**. Twenty-seven delegates from our synod joined them for their celebration in December. It was our pleasure to present a gift of \$100,000 in honor of the celebration. This money came from throughout the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, from individuals, congregations, Sunday Schools, women's groups, and youth fund raisers. It was a special gift that you made happen.

Highlights from this past year take us from our doorsteps to half way around the world. That is what we have accomplished together. Thank you!

Shalom,

Bishop Harold Usgaard