



endless possibilities in God's grace

Southeastern Minnesota Synod Assembly 2022
May 7, 2022 in Mankato - semnsynod.org/assembly

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Southeastern Minnesota Synod
of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Synod Structure

SOUTHEASTERN MINNESOTA SYNOD

Constitutional Committees:

- Committee on Candidacy
- Committee on Discipline
- Committee on Consultation
- Committee on the Election of a Bishop
- Audit Committee
- Endowment Committee
- Synod Nominating Committee

First Call Theological Education

Faith Formation Network

Interim Network

Conferences:

- Conference of Deans
- Root River
- Zumbro River
- Minnesota River
- Blue Earth River
- Cannon River

Office of the Bishop Committees:

- Theological Conference
- Committees including...
 - *Planning
 - *Worship
 - *Workshops
- Synodical Leader Grant Team
- Compensation Guidelines Committee
- Hunger Task Force
- Development Team
- Augsburg University Board

Synod Council:

Executive Committee:

- Personnel Committee
- Finance Committee
- Committees of the Assembly including...
 - *Planning
 - *Workshops
 - *Worship
 - *Election
 - *Credentials
- *Reference and Counsel

Tables:

- Faith Formation Table
- Mission Support Table
- Congregational Renewal Table
- Global Ministry Table
- Community Accompaniment Table

Global Ministry Teams:

- Colombia
- Tanzania
- Medical Ministry
- AMMPARO
- Hunger

Other Synod-Related Organizations:

- Lutheran Men in Mission
- Women of the ELCA

Southeastern Minnesota Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Equipping congregations and leaders to follow Jesus into a changing world.
Developing leaders • Equipping congregations • Accompanying global partners



History

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) came into being on January 1, 1988. The geographic boundaries of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod were discerned through a series of gatherings in 1986-1987. The first Synod Assembly was held in the spring of 1988. This year we celebrate our 34th assembly!

Structure

The Holy Spirit has been continuing to call, gather, and enlighten throughout the 34 years of our synod's history. One of the ways the Spirit works is through our tables, teams, committees, and staff. The structure continues to evolve over time. The graphic above is a depiction of the current organizational layout of the synod.

Synod Council Report

Lisa Dierks, Vice President

What is the mission of your group?

The Synod Council serves as the synod's board of directors and as its interim legislative authority between meetings of the synod assembly. The Executive Committee consists of the four synod officers and two persons elected annually by the synod council from its own membership.

The Pandemic continued to impact our ability to meet in person for Synod Council. With almost 50% of the council members being new to their role, this year our work has focused on orientation to the work of Synod Council as well as Synod staff. We spent time reflecting on our individual strengths and the contributions the strengths of every person make to the greater good. We spent time with Rev. Matt Larson learning about the candidacy process & its many pathways. Kathy Chatelaine updated the Council on the work of Global Ministry in the Synod and some of the challenges & joys among our global partners.

Over the past year, how have you experienced God's faithfulness through the work of your group?

Council members continue to be inspired and heartened by the resilience, faithfulness and creativity of the Office of the Bishop staff and the leaders and congregations across our synod in facing the challenges of the past years. God has strengthened us all to carry out the ministry of loving and serving our neighbors in new and remarkable ways.

While digital meetings and worship opportunities have allowed us to gather safely during the pandemic, they have not brought the joy of gathering in person and the same opportunities for relationship-building that come with face-to-face interactions. As we begin to gather in person on a more

regular basis, may we take the time to be appreciative of the presence of others and God in our lives.

How might individuals and congregations support you and the ministry with which you are involved?

I would like to thank all the members of the Synod for your patience over this past year as I have stepped into this new leadership role. Thank you to everyone who has personally supported me and especially to Ann Peterson for sharing her wealth of experience.

Committee on Candidacy

from Rev. Trish Reedstrom

The effort of the Candidacy Committee is to work with seminarians who are interested in becoming a rostered minister of the ELCA, and to accompany them along a multi-year path toward realization of that goal. The members of the committee come from across the synod and bring varied expertise - rostered leaders, lay leaders and seminary faculty along with Rev. Matt Larson and Cheryse Brenno from the Synod Office and Deacon Krista Anderson from Region 3 of the ELCA. Our seminarians also bring varied educational and life experiences with them. Some seminarians are moving directly into ministry from their undergraduate experience while others have spent a number of years in corporate, non-profit or government settings; still others come with previous and current ministry experience, often in congregational settings. At this time a total of 22 seminarians are in the candidacy process in the SEMN Synod.

The process itself is a three-part process and begins when a candidate applies for "entrance". Entrance is the first step toward ordination and includes a comprehensive psychological assessment, background checks, health assessment, essay, recommendations and interviews. Once that step is completed the educational process begins. Approximately midway through their educational work and after completion of one unit of Clinical Pastoral Education training, candidates are endorsed. In addition to evaluation of the items already noted, there is once again a required essay and interview.

Once endorsed, it is often time for internship (for Word and Sacrament candidates) or a supervised field experience (for Word and Service candidates). These are opportunities, up to 12 months of full-time experience, to receive hands-on training and opportunities in a context appropriate to their

work. Internships may be full or part-time, and continued educational work may or may not be happening at the same time. For those congregations/leaders that have been or currently provide such experience to the candidates in our synod, thank you!

The final step of candidacy is approval, consisting of a recommendation from seminary faculty, internship evaluations, essay and interviews. Once approved the candidate is ready to receive a call, and the larger church welcomes a new leader to its ministry. This past year, 6 candidates were approved for Rostered Ministry.

It is no surprise that the work of this committee has been challenged by pandemic restrictions and requirements, but one highlight of the past year was the opportunity to resume gathering for our yearly retreat with Candidacy Committee members and candidates. This retreat occurred in November, 2021 at Good Earth Village, and the chance to gather for conversation, relationship-building and education was appreciated by all.

Individuals and congregations across the synod can assist the Candidacy Committee in their work by identifying potential future leaders of the ELCA. Candidates often tell us that they were led to ministry thanks to the words of a trusted mentor, pastor, or congregational leader who saw their gifts and encouraged them to consider seminary. These leaders are in all our congregations – look for and encourage them!

Community Accompaniment Table

from Regina Seabrook

Over the past year the Community Accompaniment Table has made some significant strides in how we understand our work and laying the foundation for the future of the Table.

In November 2021 the Table met on a Saturday for a daylong retreat to revisit our mission and vision as a table. After spending this intentional time discerning where the Holy Spirit is guiding us in this work the Table identified four goals that are central to the work we are doing. The four goals are:

1. Keep the Gospel central in our work for justice
2. Accompany and resource congregations as they live into the Gospel message of justice
3. Prioritize leadership of youth (14-17) and young adults (18-30) in this work
4. Institutionalize the work

With these four goals to guide us, the Table is working on expanding our members and restructuring so that we better support leaders and congregations in the synod and also use our resources more effectively. We are currently recruiting people and gathering a list of resources that can be shared with congregations. We are also branching out and exploring possible partnerships with the Minnesota Council of Churches and surrounding ELCA synods.

A lot is happening with the “set” the Table and we are excited to continue to walk with congregations who are doing the work of building our beloved community.

Compensation Guidelines Taskforce

from Rev. Barb Streed

What is the mission of your group?

The Minimum Compensation and Benefits Guidelines Task Force (MCBG) works to present as a tool for congregations and staff to use together so that compensation and benefit decisions can be made in such a way that God's mission flourishes, staff members are cherished as servants of God, there is a sense of faithful partnership between church members and staff and all areas of the church's ministry thrive. MCBG promote calls based on matching the rostered leader's gifts with a congregation's needs, rather than encouraging leaders to select positions based too heavily on the promise of better compensation. Our committee is made up of rostered leaders, synod staff, lay professionals, and lay congregational members from the SE MN Synod. Our committee does research on comparing our synod's compensation guidelines with similar sized synods in our surrounding area, communication with Portico Benefit Services to help provide the best information to rostered leaders and congregations.

It was a goal of this group in at the time of this report in 2021 that we would move forward in offering up educational opportunities to congregations and rostered leaders regarding understanding a rostered minister's compensation and benefits. We accomplished this as we offered both zoom and in-person gatherings specifically geared towards congregational councils and rostered ministers, but were open to all. We also developed a one-page resource called *Understanding your Pastor's Compensation* provided to congregations in call process for Minister of Word and Sacrament. Our mission in all of this is to support the needs of both congregations and rostered leaders.

Over the past year, how have you experienced God's faithfulness through the work of your group?

It was wonderful be around the table in many conversations regarding the work of this task force: zoom Connecting with Councils gatherings, Councils as Leaders gathering, and numerous congregational call process tables. God provided the grace found in the hearts of those at these conversations that was needed to have these conversations. Good and hard questions were asked, folks were able to share vulnerably their need for better understanding around this topic, and the needs of both congregations and rostered minsters were shared in places that felt safe and open to the hearing of one another.

How might individuals and congregations support you and the ministry with which you are involved?

There are a variety of ways to support the ministry of this committee. Congregations can continue to provide accurate reporting information to the synod office, as well as to reach out to this committee when they need help with translating these guidelines into real world practice with their rostered leaders or if they need help navigating the Portico Benefit options. Leadership in individual congregations can also provide updated staffing information for their congregations beyond the rostered leaders, as well as providing the synod office with current information regarding their congregational council leadership. Individual rostered leaders can continue to provide accurate information through their yearly reporting to the bishop's office in reports, as well as passing along communications from this committee to their congregational councils and leadership committees such as personnel committees.

*Submitted by
Reverend Barb Streed
Minimum Compensation and Benefits
Guidelines Task Force Staff Liaison*

Endowment Committee

from Dianna Parks

What is the mission of your group?

The mission of the Synod Endowment Committee is to promote the synod's endowment(s).

1. Establish and uphold the impact of the fund according to synodical bylaws.
2. Recommend education and promotion strategies for prospective donors.
3. Recommend and approve marketing pieces and other tools.
4. As appropriate, develop cultivation and solicitation strategies to include outright and planned gifts to the fund.
5. As appropriate, execute cultivation and solicitation strategies.
 - a. Maintain policies for endowment oversight to include recommendations to Synod Council
 - b. Define a checklist for receiving and investing endowment gifts to ensure proper funds management, i.e., that gifts intended to be invested in perpetuity are not set up as spendable funds.

Ensure that gifts are solicited in accordance with the Synod Gift Acceptance Policy.

Over the past year, how have you experienced God's faithfulness through the work of your group?

Our group has been focusing on gratitude and impact, learning more about the way people express their faith through their gifts. It has been humbling to see what the work of the synod -- collectively and through the Office of the Bishop -- means to our community, and to learn about personal experiences that inform giving choices.

How might individuals and congregations support you and the ministry with which you are involved?

As the Office of the Bishop and Synod Council implement the Five Channels of Generosity and the Holy Spirit Fund, individuals and congregations can help to promote and attract resources to fulfill the goals set therein. As Spirit moves in our synod and ministries, the endowment will be available to fund innovation and opportunities, and assist with emergencies beyond the resources of one congregation. As one body of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, together we establish our ministerial priorities and equip staff and leaders and members to do God's work in our region and the world.

Faith Formation Table

from Lindsay Colwell

What is the mission of your group?

The Faith Formation Table provides a framework and networking group for equipping and mentoring faith formation leaders in the SE MN Synod. The table welcomes faith formation professionals, rostered leaders, and volunteer leaders. Recognizing that God is at work through the Holy Spirit in a variety of ways, places, and people, the table aims to foster conversation, educational experiences, and resources that help our leaders across the synod equip followers of Christ for a life of discipleship at every age and experience.

Over the past year, how have you experienced God's faithfulness through the work of your group?

The Faith Formation Table continued to provide monthly meetings online on a wide range of topics such as land acknowledgment, addiction recovery, and adapting to new ways of ministry with ministry leaders such as Tiger McLuen, Kelly Sherman-Conroy, and Terri Elton. We had hoped to hold our annual January retreat in person with Dr. Terri Elton on the topic of Journeying in the Wilderness: Faith Formation in the 21st Century, but an upturn in COVID cases forced us to move our retreat online. This retreat was graciously sponsored by a local Thrivent representative. Throughout it all, our leaders in faith formation, from paid staff to volunteers, have continued to share faith, support, and resources as we pivot in this difficult time. Relationship with God and one another is at the heart of all we do.

How might individuals and congregations support you and the ministry with which you are involved?

- Whether you are a volunteer, lay professional, or rostered leader, join our network! You can find us at facebook.com/semnsynodfamilyministry or email Ashley Corbett at corbett@semnsynod.org to be added to the email list. We are better when we have a variety of voices and partners with which we can share and learn.
- Make sure your congregation has updated information to the synod office regarding staff and contact person for faith formation.
- If you are a part of a congregation, ask your faith formation leader how you can support their personal and professional development.

Submitted by Lindsay Colwell, Director of Youth and Family Ministry, St. John's Kasson

Global Ministry Table

from Rev. Mike Walerius

What is the mission of your group?

The mission of the Global Ministry Table is to walk hand in hand with our global partners, local congregations and ministry partners. Our focus is on building accompaniment relationships as we discover together God's call for the church universal.

Over the past year, where have you witnessed God at work?

We have witnessed God's work this year in many places and in many people throughout the Global Ministry Table and work.

- 40 Together was a new initiative that Global Ministries started this past year. Through the 40 days of Lent we challenged congregations to give a dollar per baptized member to Global, and asked households to participate by giving a dollar a day per family member. These funds were then distributed to our partners. Along with the financial challenge, 40 Together also made weekly devotional videos where people told personal stories about some aspect of Global Ministries and our local partners.
- Through the continued relationship between our partners in Tanzania and Colombia, we have witnessed God's love and guidance even as we have not been able to travel due to Covid restrictions.
- We have also witnessed God in the support of global ministries throughout the Southeastern MN Synod. Your faithful support is a huge way we feel God present in this ministry.

- Finally, through the dedicated work of the Global Ministry Staff, Table, and Team members who continue to build relationships and walk with our siblings in Christ across the globe, we recognize God's loving presence.

How might individuals and congregations support you and the ministry with which you are involved?

There are many ways in which individuals and congregations can support the Global Ministries.

- Through continued prayer support for both the Table and our global and local partners.
- Through financial support. There are many specific areas that individuals or congregations can give: Tanzania or Colombia Education, Tanzania Health Care, Global Ministry Undesignated, AMMPARO, local SEMN Hunger Grants. 100% of these specific global funds support Global Ministry work and the needs of our partners.
- Become an accompaniment partner congregation with a school or another congregation in Tanzania or Colombia. Congregations can build relationships through prayer, letters, video chats or other virtual communications. These relationships can be wonderful ways for entire congregations to connect with other Lutherans around the world.
- Invite a member of the AMMPARO team to your congregation for a speaking engagement where you can lean of the work they are doing with Migrant Minors in local communities, the United States and abroad.

AMMPARO Team

from D.J. Chatelaine

To the People of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod:

The AMMPARO ministry team continued our efforts to accompany migrant children and their families in Southeastern Minnesota and at the U.S./Mexico border. This ministry expands with each passing day. Here is an overview of what the AMMPARO team has been up to over the past year:

- Facilitated *A Migrant Journey* learning experience, both online and in person, for 15 SEMN Synod congregations. *A Migrant Journey* is an immersive experience for youth and/or adults that places participants in the shoes of people immigrating from Central America to the United States.
- Held a book study on The God Who Sees by Karen González. 25 people from 12 SEMN Synod congregations participated in this month-long weekly Zoom conversation.
- Continued to partner with local community organizations who provide services (education, health care, legal, food, visitation) for migrant minors and their families.
- Accompanied SEMN Synod congregations who are sponsoring asylum seekers and Afghan refugees.
- Have had continued discernment with congregations who are interested in sponsoring migrant families.
- Continued to support basic needs of migrant minors at our borderland partners: Border Servant Corps, Annunciation House, and faith shelters in Colonia Anapra.
- Visited congregations to tell the story of AMMPARO ministry in SEMN, including past border visits.
- Convened quarterly meetings of the

Welcoming Congregation Network for people to share ministries and resources.

- Advocated for immigration reform and humane treatment of migrant families at the State and National levels.

As you can see, our ministry is busy and continuing to grow. To explore opportunities, including joining individuals and congregations throughout the Synod in this transformational ministry, contact Kathy at chatelaine@semnsynod.org. The Holy Spirit is at work, and we are guided to listen to the ways we can love our neighbors—near and far. Throughout this ministry our team returns to Micah 6:8: “What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?”

In Peace,
D.J. Chatelaine
AMMPARO Team Co-Chair

Hunger Team

from Ron Knutson

The Hunger Team continues to uplift the basic human rights of food and shelter. We are grateful to the continued support of congregations and individuals for their contributions to the Synod's global ministry funds and to ELCA World Hunger.

This year the constraints of covid did not hold us back. A SEMN Synod congregation received a substantial three-year grant from ELCA World Hunger to address local food insecurity. In addition, through an ELCA/SEMN Synod COVID hunger grant, eight congregations received funds toward local food ministries. Significant funds have also been provided to our global partners to address COVID-related food insecurity: in Colombia for students, widows, and people with disabilities; and in the drought-stricken Central Diocese of Tanzania for rural students, palliative care patients, and subsistence farmers.

The Hunger Team has also taken the initiative of continuing an annual local grant for congregations in the SEMN Synod. With generous funding from an anonymous source, the SEMN Synod Hunger Grant will be offered again in 2022 for local hunger ministries. Watch for application details in an upcoming RC Weekly!

The team has also had new members join us, and we are thankful for that.

We encourage congregations to continue financial support of SEMN Synod's global ministry and ELCA World Hunger. Your generosity makes a difference in the lives of our siblings in Christ in both local and global communities!

Ron Knutson
Chair for the Hunger Team

Colombia Accompaniment Team

from Rev. Mark Johnson

What is the mission of your group?

The Colombia Accompaniment Team partners with the Assistant to the Bishop for Global Ministry and the Global Ministry Table to maintain and strengthen the Synod's companion synod relationship with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Colombia (IELCO).

We live out our unity in Christ through the following ways:

- Pray regularly for IELCO;
- Uphold and review the synod's covenant with IELCO and other IELCO partners through
 - communication with IELCO, synod leaders, and synod congregations;
 - implementing the mutual goals and priorities of this relationship in partnership with IELCO and;
 - regular review of the synod's financial support of IELCO.
- environmental issues; and other challenges.
- Advocate on behalf of a healthy and just public policy toward Colombia and Latin America.
- Invite your congregation to make a designated financial contribution to support the many and varied ministries of IELCO (including Education, Peace and Reconciliation initiatives, Hunger ministries)
- Serve on the Colombia Accompaniment Team.

*Submitted by: Pastor Mark Johnson,
Chairperson,
Colombia Accompaniment Team*

How might individuals and congregations support you and the ministry with which you are involved?

- Pray for Colombia as it enters into elections for president and national leaders.
- Pray for IELCO as it reaches out to serve communities impacted by conflict, displacement, climate change, and the pandemic; to be a partner in building peace and reconciliation in Colombia.
- Have your congregation enter into an accompaniment-focused relationship with a Colombian congregation or school.
- Learn about Colombia, including the ongoing peace process and ongoing work of reconciliation and renewal;

Medical Ministry Team

from Joanne Heathman

Medical Ministry is currently a team of 10 members representing three of the five conferences in the SEMN Synod, the Assistant to the Bishop for Global Ministry, and representatives from Global Health Ministries. The Team meets quarterly, and as needed. The Team's purpose is to work in collaboration with other local partners, review health care needs and medical funding requests from our global partners, and make recommendations to the Global Ministry Table when action is needed and is consistent with goals and priorities. Challenges to the provision of healthcare services includes inadequate staffing and management, inadequate training, medical facilities, supplies and equipment, hunger, and inadequate infrastructure such as water, electricity, communication systems, and roads. As a result, medical insecurity is a way of life for many people.

The Team's responsibilities include:

- Working with the Assistant to the Bishop for Global Ministry and the Global Ministry Table to develop and strengthen the Synod's financial support and accompaniment of global and local partners in medical ministries.
- Accompanying the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tanzania, Central Diocese medical ministry initiatives.
- Accompanying the South Sudan medical ministry initiatives.
- Establishing goals and priorities for program support and project development.
- Making recommendations to the Global Ministry Table for approval of distribution of funds.
- Assisting the synod in fund raising initiatives for medical ministry.
- Reviewing and updating priorities annually and as needed.

This past year the team continued to meet via ZOOM, and participated fully to get the work of the team accomplished. God's faithfulness was evident when, over and over, dedicated team members willingly took the lead to meet group responsibilities and address challenges related to medical ministry. Medical needs met include shipments of medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) to US/Mexico borderlands and rural Tanzanian communities; a physician in a small rural Tanzanian hospital receiving steady financial support so local patient care can continue; pharmaceuticals being replenished; people suffering from chronic and end-of-life diseases receiving appropriate nourishment and supportive medical care; and technology aiding communication with global friends and partners. This ministry is evidence of God's faithfulness and work in the lives of our siblings in Christ throughout the world! I am strengthened by the commitment of this group as they continue to engage and not allow a pandemic to interrupt the mission of the Team. With hope, we anticipate gathering in person at our next team meeting this spring.

Individuals can show support of Medical Ministry by volunteering to become a member of the Medical Ministry Team and by supporting your congregation's partnerships. Congregations can show support of Medical Ministry by establishing a mutual, inclusive accompaniment relationship with SEMN Synod local and global partners and generously providing funds to Tanzania Healthcare, AMMPARO or Global Ministry Undesignated. 100% of your gift goes directly to these transformative partner health ministries. Thanks be to God!

*Respectfully submitted by Joanne Heathman,
Chair, Medical Ministry Team*

Tanzania Accompaniment Team

from Rev. Nick Fisher-Broin

I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. . . For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.

-Philippians 1:3-5, 8

Paul wrote these words from prison to the people of Philippi. Although he longed to be united with the Philippians, Paul mused that his present circumstance actually spread the Gospel of Jesus. Like Paul, we long to meet face-to-face with our beloved siblings in the Central Diocese of Tanzania. And, like Paul and the people of Philippi, in spite of the pandemic, the ministry and relationships between the people of the Central Diocese and the Southeastern Minnesota Synod continue to thrive!

In 2021, with the Tanzanian government finally acknowledging the existence of COVID, congregations and communities were able to more freely embrace cultural traditions around illness and death. For example, with the death of an individual due to COVID, communities could again gather to support the grieving family rather than the family enduring a hasty burial on their own. In communication with Tanzanian individuals and congregations, we could ask about the prevalence of COVID in communities rather than using the pseudonym, 'strong pneumonia'. The investment of visits throughout the years provided a table set for adaptability, resiliency, and sustainability during challenging circumstances.

Listed below are a number of priorities which animated our partnership in the last year:

- WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and Zoom or Skype calls have become the

preferred method of visiting during this time of suspended in-person visits. Going forward, we will lean into both virtual and face-to-face visits to connect with our partners.

- Students at Kijota Hull High School and Iambi Secondary School continue to be 'top performers' on national exams among Tanzanian secondary schools (public and private). The leadership, staff and students of Ihanja Technical School are transforming the once-struggling school into another successful learning space in the Central Diocese. As parents desire their children to receive a quality education that equips for the future, enrollment and waiting lists have substantially increased at all three schools. Congregations and individuals within the SEMN Synod provided *designated education funds* towards scholarships for rural children, particularly girls. During COVID, when visits home were prohibited, additional funding was provided for the extra food that was needed to sustain life.
- Palliative care ministry (end of life, chronic illness), including home and clinic visits, culturally appropriate food, and pharmaceuticals, continued at high levels. An increase of *designated health care funds* empowered palliative care staff to 'feed the hungry and care for the sick.'
- Designated health care funds* were also provided towards the salary of Iambi Lutheran Hospital's doctor/medical director. Dr. Lightness Gudu is providing stability and vision to this rural hospital.
- Pastors and evangelists received theological and pastoral formation at Lutheran Institute Kiomboi, preparing women and men to serve in rural parishes throughout the Central Diocese.
- As resources diminished in communities

Tanzania Accompaniment Team continued

already living day-to-day, *designated funds* supported diocese pastors and leaders. In turn, pastors provided food for hungry people within their parish.

- We give thanks for the life and ministry of missionary Dr. Mark Jacobson, who was diagnosed with brain cancer while in Arusha and, several months later, died while surrounded by his wife, Linda, and their daughters in Minneapolis.

How can SEMN congregations and individuals partner with our siblings in the Central Diocese of Tanzania? First and foremost – pray! Congregations are also invited to enter into or re-energize an accompaniment partnership with a Central Diocese school or congregation. And, as the Spirit leads, consider contributing financially towards health, education or general ministry initiatives.

*Respectfully Submitted,
Pastor Nick Fisher-Broin,
Chairperson, Tanzania Accompaniment Team
and
Kathy Chatelaine
Assistant to the Bishop*

Reference and Counsel

from Rev. Dr. Scott E. Olson

The work of Reference and Counsel is to shepherd resolutions brought to the synod assembly. We do this by receiving, reviewing, and editing resolutions submitted by congregations, councils, or conferences. We work with the resolution writers as needed for clarity and ensure the resolutions are formatted correctly before presenting them at the annual Synod Assembly. In prior years, we have also provided education regarding the resolution process. Our goal is to provide both the authors and voting members resolutions in their best possible form so that the assembly can make good decisions.

Over the past year, we have experienced God's faithfulness through the continued presence of experienced members, the willingness of new members to step forward, and the guidance of synod staff member Rev. Emily Carson. The entire committee approached their work with diligence, thoughtfulness, and humility.

Individuals and congregations can support the ministry of our team by praying for us in our work. We would also welcome any questions regarding crafting a resolution or the process that needs to be followed. Guidelines for crafting and submitting resolutions are available and helpful. Finally, individuals and congregations can support our work through being active in their conferences to discern what actionable resolutions the Holy Spirit might be calling them to create.

Respectfully Submitted,
Rev. Dr. Scott E. Olson, Chair

Office of the Bishop Reflections

Several years ago, I was in a room much like the one we are gathered in for our 2022 Synod Assembly. I sat in the audience listening to a parade of preachers and speakers offer their hard earned wisdom on leadership and ministry. Our teachers were from a variety of backgrounds, denominations, and business sectors. One preacher challenged us to think beyond the normal limitations of our imagination.

A few weeks later, I sat with my congregation's council and used pencils and pens to create the semblance of a horse fence in the middle of the table. As I moved the pens to create a larger and larger space, I wondered aloud what ministry would like if we learned to expand the bounds of what we thought possible. In the midst of the conversation, we asked questions of one another. *How were we allowing ourselves and our sense of call to our congregation and community to be hemmed in? What would change if we started to think of the bounds of what we'd done before as markers to be expanded upon?*

That conversation was really the beginning of this Synod Assembly. (I didn't know that at the time, of course!) For years, I've been wondering what it might mean to be a people who practice thinking beyond our normal capacity for imagination. What would it mean to be a people who wonder what opportunities lie just beyond the bounds of what we think is possible? How would that change the way we live as God's people in this place?

My hope for our time together today, and for the journey we will continue on long after this day is done, is that we might practicing thinking in a way that pushes even the bounds of our own imaginations. What if we started to imagine the impossible? What if we realized even our imaginations are small and limited when compared to the mind and heart of God?

What if, when an outlandish idea popped into our heads, or we came up with something unheard of in a brainstorming session, we actually considered what was once outlandish? What if we allowed creativity free rein every once in a while?

How would our congregations change? Who would hear the gospel in a new way? What in us and around us would be transformed?

I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit. My prayers for this synod are grounded in a petitioning of God that the Spirit might be poured out upon us so that we proclaim the gospel in ways all can hear and understand. I pray we will be an ever more bold and faithful people. I pray we continue to abide in the presence and will of God. I pray we will step out in faith at every opportunity, confident that we serve a God who is capable of doing far more than we could ever ask... or even *imagine*.

Dear friends, what haven't we even imagined yet?

In Christ,



Rev. Regina Hassanally
Bishop of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, ELCA

Office of the Bishop Reflections

Joe Ahrens - Business Manager

Explain your role on staff.

I was hired as Business Manager this past July. My role is to oversee the financial and internal controls of the Office of the Bishop. This includes reviewing congregational support remittance, managing cash disbursements and payments, and maintaining the financial integrity of the organization. This also includes assisting in the annual budget and audit efforts.

Over the past year, how have you experienced God's grace and faithfulness in your role on staff?

I have very much enjoyed getting to know my coworkers these past few months. I appreciate the camaraderie and levity of the staff. They have a keen focus on the mission of the synod and live it with a sense of fun. Also, Assisi Heights is a wonderful place to have an office. The grounds and building are truly magnificent and inspiring. I feel blessed, honored, and humbled to work here.

How might individuals and congregations support you and the ministry with which you are involved?

I believe that sound fiscal management is grounded in transparency and that it goes both ways. I will do all I can to ensure the financial integrity of the organization and ask that you help me in this effort. For example, being as clear as possible on your congregational remittance forms helps us know exactly where you want your giving to go. While financial reports sometimes seem like numbers on a page, there is a human element behind those numbers. I am interested in learning those stories and intent. If you have questions on financial policy or best practices, I am here to help.

Office of the Bishop Reflections

Cheryse Brenno - Call Process and Roster Administrator

Explain your role on staff.

My main role is with the Call Process. Maintaining the Rostered Minister Profiles and Ministry Site Profiles for the rostered leaders and congregations in transition. Administer correspondence for all call processes and mobility such as Letters of Call, Interim Agreements and Contracted Agreements with call chairs and rostered ministers.

My other responsibilities consist of the management of each rostered minister individual and congregation files, Candidacy, personnel files, Mission Support, finances, and others as assigned.

Over the past year, how have you experienced God's grace and faithfulness in your role on staff?

- As we look at creative and imaginative ways to do ministry we need to dance with the Holy Spirit as we journey through these transitions. Ministry is changing and will continue to change. The last couple of years we have had so many transitions and there is where we have experience God's grace and faithfulness. So let us Dance!
- Congregations that are developing possibilities of sharing and doing ministry together.
- The building of relationships with the pastoral and lay leadership of this synod and in other synods.
- Assisi Heights! The graciousness and friendship of the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi. How blessed we are!

How might individuals and congregations support you and the ministry with which you are involved?

I am always forever grateful for your prayers and continued support! It has been a blessed opportunity to serve for the Office of the Bishop on Synod Staff for the past 20 years! I share with you a Bible verse I carry in my heart:

"Surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."
Jeremiah 29:11

As we journey together to do God's work, blessing to you and remember-

***Only one thing in life
is truly dependable and stable...
God's love for us.***

Office of the Bishop Reflections

Rev. Emily Carson - Assistant to the Bishop/Director for Evangelical Mission, Cultivator of a Culture of Generosity and Care

Explain your role on staff.

It is my great joy to cultivate generosity and care throughout the life of the synod. The congregations, specialized ministries and people of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod are thoughtful stewards of their compassion, attention and resources. Each day I get to nurture and celebrate that stewardship. I also oversee synod strategies related to mission support, the annual fund, special offerings, and the 5 channels of generosity.

Congregational visits are a huge highlight of my role, and I join congregations for Sunday worship, council meetings and stewardship committee gatherings. In all of these spaces, I aspire to shine a spotlight on the movement of the Holy Spirit in ways that help all of us to more fully step into the flow of God's infinite goodness!

As the Director for Evangelical Mission, I have the privilege of accompanying new ministries in the synod and supporting efforts of innovation and collaboration within the synod and beyond. The synod regularly offers 'Power and Boundaries' workshops for congregational staff and rostered ministers, and I am the developer and facilitator of those workshops.

I am also the synod staff liaison to the Committee on Reference and Counsel, Synod Leader Grant Team, Councils as Leaders Planning Team, Connected in Mission group, and Endowment Committee - and the synod staff liaison to the Community Accompaniment Table.

Over the past year, how have you experienced God's grace and faithfulness in your role on staff?

The people and histories of the congregations of the synod have been my greatest teachers over the past year. Last spring I began a practice of carving time to do intentional historical research before spending time with a congregation. This has become a beloved spiritual practice. The oldest congregations of our synod go back to 1854, and I've had such profound encounters with God's grace and faithfulness as I've delved into the histories of the Lutherans of Southeastern Minnesota. Reading and hearing stories about generations of partnership, generosity and collaboration have spurred in my mind all kinds of inspiration for future synod possibilities. The past year has revealed to me the deep value of living with an openness to the Wisdom winds that blow from all directions: the past, the present and the future. I give thanks for the opportunity to learn every day from the people and histories of this synod.

How might individuals and congregations support you and the ministry with which you are involved?

I would be honored to learn with and from you and your congregation. Whether it be an adult forum or a council meeting or after worship on a Sunday, I'd be so grateful to come and spend time with you and learn about the ways you're already living as faithful stewards! I'd also love to be a resource who can accompany you as you set stewardship goals and imagine new ministry possibilities as we proclaim the good news of Jesus together!

Office of the Bishop Reflections

Kathy Chatelaine - Assistant to the Bishop for Global Ministry

Central to my call as Assistant to the Bishop in Global Ministry is the accompaniment of global and local congregations, leaders, ministries and individuals united in Christ-centered relationships around daily life, prayer, worship, education, health care, hunger, and justice initiatives. Imagine experiencing God's dream of life together in Christ – here and now! - as together we embrace the amazing diversity within Christ's global church both abroad and within SEMN Synod communities!

Walking together in global leadership are synod lay and rostered leaders who serve on:

- Global Ministry Table
- AMMPARO Team
- Colombia Accompaniment Team
- Hunger Team
- Medical Ministry Team
- Tanzania Accompaniment Team

Over the past year, how have you experienced God's grace and faithfulness through your work?

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases, God's mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is God's faithfulness.

-Lamentations 3:22-23

God is ever faithful! As the Holy Spirit unites us with our cherished partners and ministries throughout the world via technology such as WhatsApp, Zoom and Messenger, we continue to share joys and sorrows, prayer, stories, and our shared life together in Christ during this time when travel is suspended. Through *A Migrant Journey* interactive experience, as local confirmation students and adults to 'walk in the shoes' of Central American youth leaving their beloved communities in search of safety and life, God

inspires us to faithfully follow God's law of 'welcome the stranger'. As five female pastors from Colombia – a country where the vast majority of clergy are male - gather monthly with female pastors throughout their North American partners, leaders are mutually empowered to proclaim the abundant love and grace of Jesus – in word and action - throughout their local communities! I invite you to read more examples of God's amazing faithfulness in the reports of the Global Ministry Table and Teams, included in this packet.

How might individuals and congregations support you and the ministry with which you are involved?

Through global and local ministry initiatives, congregations and individuals are engaged in education, conversation, and unified action around relevant issues that we, as Lutherans and citizens of our nation, currently face. When we feed the hungry in local and global communities, share funds to educate impoverished children and provide medical care in rural Tanzanian communities, advocate for just and humane policies that impact the safety and lives of children, welcome the refugee into our communities, and pray for all of God's beloved children throughout the world, we are faithfully responding to God's faithfulness to us. Imagine the abundant love and grace of Jesus unleashed throughout local and global communities as we live God's dream of life together in Christ! I thank God for your faithfulness!

With great hope,
Kathy Chatelaine
Assistant to the Bishop

Office of the Bishop Reflections

Ashley Corbett - Director of Communications

Explain your role on staff.

I get to serve this synod and the Office of the Bishop in so many exciting (to me) ways related to communication: email, website, social media, videos, putting together this Pre-Assembly Report, and so on. Sharing messages and stories in careful and intentional ways is a big part of what I get to do on a regular basis. I also work hard to support, equip, and uplift our leaders in their ministry settings as best I can.

Over the past year, how have you experienced God's grace and faithfulness in your role on staff?

- The relationships I have had the opportunity to grow and develop, especially as we had the opportunity to spend more and more time in-person, are a constant reminder of the faithfulness and imagination to be found within God's people.
- As I spend time with people in different spaces, I continue to learn and wonder and question everything. And repeating that cycle over and over again allows my heart and mind to constantly re-imagine how we, God's people, can be disciples in a relevant and authentic way. Sometimes I get stuck, but the practices of learning, wondering, and questioning are always what I need to get me back on track.
- Getting to spend time on creative endeavors, such as re-designing the synod's website, gives me life and reminds me how much everything is constantly changing around me, yet the most important things are always there.

How might individuals and congregations support you and the ministry with which you are involved?

I appreciate when I see congregations and individuals sharing the Good News. There are so many ways to do this, and the synod works hard to be part of that. I ask that you would pay attention to what we have to say, as you are able, and then to share what is relevant as it makes sense.

I also hope that you would share with me the things you find. Not because I will pass everything along, but because the more we see and hear, the more we can imagine and wonder together.

Your continued prayers for this office are needed: prayers for God's word to be clearly proclaimed through all of our work.

Please reach out to me with your stories, ideas, questions, and dreams for God's work in this synod. You can always email me at corbett@semnsynod.org.

Office of the Bishop Reflections

Rev. Matt Larson - Assistant to the Bishop for Candidacy, Leadership, and Congregation Care

Explain your role on staff.

My role on the SEMN Synod Staff is to tend to the synod candidacy efforts, work with synod programs for leadership development, and tend to congregation care with an emphasis on working to find partnerships between congregations.

Over the past year, how have you experienced God's faithfulness through your work?

- In the faithful and wise collaboration between members of the Candidacy and Fall Theological Conference Committees. In both cases, they bring creativity and dedication to their work. They care deeply about those whom they serve, tend to their needs, and tend well to the charge they have on behalf of the Synod and Church.
- In the resilience of the whole People of God in the SEMN Synod. In all the ways that they have found to continue to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ, serve their neighbors, and reach out to their siblings in Christ in their congregation and all around the world. We all had to do an awful lot of adapting, and God brought good growth out of that willingness and work. We are in a season which demands resilience and adaptability; the Holy Spirit is at work in this season and in you!
- In the willingness of candidates to continue their preparation for ministry - even when circumstances have brought continued high levels of confusion and complication to that journey! The amount of chaos and polarization in so many institutions and settings would make it tempting to run for the hills - but

our Candidates continue to show trust, patience, and wisdom as they continue to make their way through the process.

- In the care, concern, and prayerful support extended to me and my family after my work-related car accident on May 12th. Countless people assured me that I was being prayed for, and I tell you the truth: those prayers were palpable. I felt it. I knew it. I am grateful for it, and for my recovery.

How might individuals and congregations support you and the ministry with which you are involved?

Individuals and congregations can support me and the ministries with which I'm involved by continuing to reimagine what being church looks like, dedicating themselves to cooperation and collaboration, and tending to what is essential without fixating solely on what is comfortable or familiar.

Office of the Bishop Reflections

Rev. Barb Streed - Assistant to the Bishop for Call Process and Congregation Care

Explain your role on staff.

My primary area of focus on the staff of the Office of the Bishop is call process. The time between when a rostered leader announces their resignation and the next 'settled' roster leader begins their call is a special time in the life of the congregation in which they engage in the call process. During this process, I work with congregational councils, transition teams, and call committees as, together, we engage the congregation in reflection, visioning, and self-study. I work to engage the call committee and candidates in interviewing and discerning. I work with rostered leaders who are feeling the nudge of the Spirit toward a new call in much the same way: reflection and visioning, interviewing and discerning. Additional areas of attention in my role on staff are congregational and rostered leader care. Both are opportunities for me to serve our synod in a variety of ways. I am also the staff liaison to the Minimum Compensation and Guidelines Task Force, the Constitution Updating Process, and the SEMN Synod Assembly.

Over the past year, how have you experienced God's faithfulness through your work?

God continues to ignite the hearts of our staff to be deeply intentional about nurturing our relationships with the congregations of the SEMN Synod and with those called to serve as rostered ministers in our synod. These relationships that are so very important to us and to God. Through the call process, I have worked to be present with congregations in call process at three key times: when they learn they will be in transition, before they begin their self-study, before they begin interviewing candidates. It has been a joy to be in-person and available to our

congregations in transition. Perhaps the area that God has called my work, and therefore me, to be most imaginative in this past year and going forward is in response to the challenge the pastoral shortage (both interims and settled pastors). I have had the opportunity to imagine with congregations and rostered leaders how the needs of God's people might be met in new and different ways. As always, God's faithfulness has stirred hearts to be open and filled with grace as we navigate our reality together.

How might individuals and congregations support you and the ministry with which you are involved?

I am always so appreciative of the grace offered when we all are trying to figure out how to re-imagine that which we do. I am always appreciative of the patience offered as we all try to take the next best step in our work, in our relationship, in ministry. I am always appreciative of open hearts and minds that folks bring to the table as we join together to listen for God's voice for our present and future together. One challenge I bring to the congregations of the SEMN Synod is to be intentional about identifying those among us who may have the gifts and heart for ordained ministry. Be bold in asking the question, "Have you ever considered being a pastor or deacon?" The church needs faith filled and faithful rostered ministers to accompany us in our faith and as we serve God's people of earth.



“And [Jesus] said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to all creation” (Mark 16:15).

Dear siblings in Christ,

When I talk about our goal of engaging a million new, young, diverse people I get asked a lot, “I’m not new, young, or diverse. Am I not important to the church anymore?” My answer is always the same, “You’ve never been more important.”

When we committed to our new goal, we identified our purpose as “Activate each of us so more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love.” This goal does not happen without the people who are already part of this church. Theresa of Avila talked about the church as the hands and feet of Christ in the world, the very way God will work to engage new people.

Those aren’t easy things to do and certainly not ones that only a few of us can do alone. God has blessed us with so many resources to do this work: nearly 3.6 million people, 65 synods, and 350 CWO staff, plus colleges, universities, seminaries, social ministry organizations, and other affiliated organizations, and our separately incorporated ministries. We truly are a church of abundance.

So, what can you do right now?

- Pray. For our church. For one another. For those whom we have yet to meet.
- Find time to listen to people who are new to the ELCA, young, and/or diverse. Share the story of Jesus with them.

Along the way, don’t forget: You are important.

Grace and peace,