

<sup>6</sup>*I planted, Apollos watered,  
but God gave the growth.*

<sup>7</sup>*So neither the one who plants  
nor the one who waters is anything,  
but only God who gives the growth.*

<sup>8</sup>*The one who plants and the one who waters  
have a common purpose, ....*

<sup>9</sup>*For we are God's servants, working together;...*  
~1 Corinthians 3: 6-9

Dear People of the Northern Great Lakes Synod,

As God's servants working together, we begin the Year of our Lord 2025 and the second year of our three-year theme of Seed Sowers. 2025 is the year we focus on "Apollos watered." Paul asserts in his letter to the Corinthians that all believers are part of the life cycle of ministry; one planting seeds- for the next one to nurture- for the next one to enjoy the growth given by the grace of God, which in turn enables seed planting for future ministry.

Together, all of us are Seed Sowers with a common purpose, and there is blessing in understanding the impact we can have in different seasons of ministry.

As I write this, the ground is freezing, the air is cold, and people are waiting and watchful for the first significant snow fall. The seeds planted last Spring were watered and bore fruit, which has long since been harvested. The garden is prepared for its winter rest.

We give thanks that winter snows will eventually provide the necessary moisture for a green Spring and the growth of new life. We know that what appears dead is only dormant. What appears lifeless is only waiting for melted snow and sunshine to bring it life.

Ministry, seeds of faith, and the life of the Church is not so different. We have been blessed by seeds of faith planted in previous generations. And in our turn, we both plant seeds and do what we can to water them, nurture them, for current and future ministry as we

invest our time, energy, and financial resources to help them grow.

We work together supporting the efforts of Lutheran Campus Ministry, Fortune Lake Camp, and collaborative youth ministry efforts. As a synod together, your generosity supports conversations around legacy plans, endowment gifts, and the emotional and technical support needed for the journey of holy closure as some congregations discern that their next most faithful step is an end to their particular efforts in ministry.

But such is not the end, never the end, of the Church. We nurture seeds that we may not live to see grow. What appears dead is only dormant. The Holy Spirit of the Living Christ has plans. As some congregations discern an end, they contribute in a way that provides needed Apollos water...to another ministry, another effort, to watering seeds planted by another that another generation will reap the harvest.

And we water seeds of faith that were planted in each of us by investing our time in Lifelong Faith Formation classes, Kaleidoscope challenges, and contributing to the energy of our own congregations. Watering seeds that have been planted in you means engaging in conversation, Bible study, learning, and participating in the worship of the one who gives the growth.

This year as we focus on watering seeds of faith, take advantage of the many ways that your congregation and our synod together provide ways to nurture seeds of faith and ministry. From Sunday worship to God's Work our Hands to learning opportunities to bringing communion to shut-ins to private moments of prayer - the Spirit is at work.

Together, we are Apollos,  
watering seeds of faith for  
God to give the growth.

Yours in Christ,  
Bishop Katherine Finegan

