



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Northern Great Lakes Synod

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Companion Relationships:

Eastern & Coastal Diocese

Evangelical Lutheran Church
in Tanzania

Delaware-Maryland Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church
in America



Rev. Thomas A. Skrenes

Bishop Emeritus

1999-2017

Rev. Dale R. Skogman

Bishop Emeritus

1991-1999

*But each of us was given grace according to the measure of Christ's gift...
... that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists,
some pastors and teachers,
to equip the saints for the work of ministry,
for building up the body of Christ...*

~from Ephesians 4:7-8

December 12, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When I first became the Assistant to the Bishop in 2012, I discovered that one of the most notable differences between congregational and synod ministry is the perspective. As a congregational pastor, my focus was on the needs and demands of a singular congregation. While we were aware of our connection to the NGLS and the ELCA as ministry partners, it was the day to day work of my setting that captured the lion's share of my attention. There were school functions, funerals, community events, planning, and the joys and challenges of congregational ministry.

But as the Assistant, and now Bishop, the perspective is wider and therefore the concerns and demands are much broader. Now, there is no singular rhythm, rather every conference has its own culture, every congregation its own personality, and all 80 congregations are the focus, not just one. The field of vision includes not only our Synod, but the whole ELCA. More recently, I was glad to gain a clearer understanding of the Lutheran voice on a global scale. It was an honor to represent the ELCA at a retreat sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation this past November. I spent time with Lutheran bishops from all

over the world: Guyana, Angola, Chile, India, Tanzania, Canada, Poland, Hungary, and Mexico. I appreciated their sense of humor, their heart for ministry, and their dedication to the work of Christ in their settings. We share some remarkably similar challenges, and some that are so unique as to be surprising. I was inspired to hear their stories and impressed with the work of the LWF. I'm glad that we, together as the ELCA, support the LWF.

In the year of our Lord 2019, I continue to be mindful of the concerns both of our Synod and your congregation. My prayer is that with the Holy Spirit and each other, we can find the best way forward to meet the challenges that this year will bring.

Know that in observance of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, an apple tree was planted in Wittenberg with our name on it! - the Northern Great Lakes Synod. If you are ever in Wittenberg, look for tree #468.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan