

~From the Bishop



The gifts he gave were 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,...

~ Ephesians 4:8

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Every May, your congregation sends two or more members to attend the Synod Assembly on behalf of your congregation. Every year, we as congregations joined together in ministry gather together for 2-3 days to learn, worship, network, celebrate, discern, discuss, and remember that we are the body of Christ together.

This is no small thing.

So often it seems there is a temptation to get overwhelmed with the demands of ministry in our own setting. We can get bogged down in the details. The mail keeps coming, the bills need to get paid, there are the continual challenges of finding volunteers, getting acolytes, arranging for funerals, attending to relationships, navigating opinions and personalities, scheduling activities around school and community calendars...I could go on and on.

Yet each one of our congregations is not an island unto itself. You are in partnership with neighboring ELCA congregations and ecumenical churches. You are connected to 79 other ELCA congregations in your Synod. In terms of the Body of Christ, you might consider yourself a toe, or a finger, or an elbow. Together as a Synod, when we think of all 80 congregations as connected, then we might be a

whole arm with a hand, or perhaps a leg with a foot attached.

Even as we consider the whole ELCA together, we are still not a complete body, as the Church also includes Presbyterians, Roman

Catholics, Methodists, Episcopalians, and on and on. Together we are the Church on earth and the body of Christ in world.

So this work we do, the mission we strive to accomplish, is not just about what your church does in your community. The World is a big place, and God so loved it all, so our efforts are not exclusively local or global, but rather both.

So that is where the Synod expression of the Church and the global expression of the Church come in very handy. Such expressions enable us to be faithful in our efforts, both locally and globally as these expressions provide the opportunity for each congregation to participate in mission and a purpose that is bigger than any one congregation or any singular community.

You are faithful to our wider mission with every gift of Mission Support that you send to the Synod. Your Synod bookkeeper, Betsy Koski, then continues that faithfulness by sending a portion of what you have sent on to the churchwide expression of the ELCA.

The percentage of that portion is one of the decisions that the Synod Assembly makes as we seek to be faithful, not only to the mission and ministry here in the Northern Great Lakes, but also the wider and bigger impact we can have as the ELCA together.

The Synod Assembly is one way that we seek to Equip the Saints for Ministry. Those who attend will return to your congregation with stories of how our work together is building up the body of Christ, not only here, but across the Church and throughout the world. They will return to you with ideas, new knowledge, and a deeper understanding of what it is that we strive to do together that has greater purpose and broader possibilities.

I pray that the people you send will find meaning and joy in the time spent with other Northern Great Lakes Synod Lutherans. And perhaps next year, it will be your turn.

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan

