

I PLANTED
Apollos WATERED
But God gave the GROWTH.
~I Corinthians 3:6

Dear People of the Northern Great Lakes Synod,

Happy New Year!

Welcome to the Year of our Lord 2024!

In this new year, I announce our Synod themes for the next three years,

Seed Sowers:

- 2024: I Planted
- 2025: Apollos Watered
- 2026: God gave the Growth

Last year at Synod Assembly, Seed Sowers was the theme for our inaugural



Seed Sowers Luncheon that thanked people who had made a planned gift (meaning that they remembered NGLS/ELCA in their will) or were considering doing so. In essence, they were a "Seed Sower," planting seeds for future ministry, seeds that they knew they would not see grow and bear fruit.

However, being a Seed Sower is not limited to those who have planned a legacy gift. After all, are we not all Seed Sowers? Do we not, all of us, plant seeds for future ministry, even as we enjoy the growth from seeds that were planted generations ago?

We plant seeds as we try and pass the faith on to the next generation. We want our children and grandchildren to be blessed by the community of faith in the same way we have been. We stretch our financial capacity to ensure sustainability for years to come. We build a reputation in our communities that we care, and we're ready to serve those in need. We raise up leaders for future generations by nurturing

their gifts for ministry. We are every day, Seed Sowers.

At this time of great transformation and change in the Church, it is good to be reminded that the Church is about more than what we experience in the here and now. And there are many ways that a congregation can plant seeds for future ministry.

I think of the faithfulness of St. James in Marinette, Wi. Founded in 1918, this community of faith has been hard at work for the sake of Christ for 106 years.

This past autumn, the people of St. James discerned that their last worship service will be Sunday April 14, 2024.

While this decision is difficult for all who love St. James, it also witnesses to their faithfulness. As people who believe in a God who brings new life from death and light from darkness, the work of St. James has not been in vain. This community of faith has accomplished that for which it was created and has completed that for which it was purposed. God will bring new life and growth from the seeds that St. James will plant. In the weeks to come, the people of St. James will consider how best to use their assets to support the work of Christ through ministry partners. Their legacy will provide resources to further the purposes of God long after the doors of St. James are closed.

As we focus on Planting this year, we celebrate the history of each and every one of our Northern Great Lakes congregations and the foresight of founding mothers and fathers who by the grace of God, planted our churches. We give thanks for adults who noticed gifts for



ministry and planted the idea of future pastoral leadership in young hearts and minds. And we look to see what seeds we can plant today that will bear fruit in a future church, that for now, we can only imagine.

*The church of Christ,
in every age beset by change, but Spirit led,
must claim and test its heritage
and keep on rising from the dead.*

~ELW #729, vs. 1

Yours in Christ,

Bishop Katherine Finegan