

NORTHERN ILLINOIS SYNOD STAFF

Report of the Communication Director

Folks in the Northern Illinois Synod are doing great things to make Christ known in their communities and I am fortunate to be able to share those stories with others in our Synod and beyond. Congregations and individuals are living out the new tagline of the ELCA – God’s Work. Our Hands.

The Synod’s weekly e-mail newsletter, *Walking Together*, is received by about 1400 inboxes. Everyone is invited to sign up to receive the e-newsletter to find out more about what's going on in the Synod. Sign up to receive the e-news by sending an email to karin@nisynod.org.

Making Christ Known, the Synod’s printed newsletter, is mailed to congregations and leaders every two months. Current and past issues are searchable and downloadable on the Synod website. Congregations are encouraged to share this newsletter with their council members and other congregational leaders, as well as to make the newsletter available for everyone. Extra copies can be requested from the Synod office. Everything in the newsletter, including the popular message from Bishop Wollersheim, is reproducible for your own bulletins or newsletters.

The website, www.nisynod.org, is full of resources for people in our Synod. More pages are being added every month.

The network of congregational communicators, which was formed in 2006, continues to grow and serve as a venue for the sharing of ideas, news, questions, and concerns. Wider participation in the group will continue to help us all better make Christ known in the Northern Illinois Synod. Please send the name of the person who communicates with your congregation (newsletter/bulletin editor, evangelism coordinator, council president, pastor, etc.) to karin@nisynod.org.

The usefulness of the communicators’ online group has spread to other areas of ministry as well. There is now an online group for congregation council officers, and a group for parish musicians is starting. If you fall into one of those categories, or have an idea for another group, please contact me.

I am blessed and honored to work with Bishop Wollersheim and his dedicated and talented staff. I am thankful for all of you from across the Synod as together we make Christ Known.

Respectfully submitted,

Karin Graddy, Associate in Ministry
Communication Director
karin@nisynod.org

Report of the Director of Development

During 2008 it was my pleasure and joy to serve as part-time Director of Development for the Northern Illinois Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

It was a blessing to work with and on behalf of Bishop Wollersheim as in partnership with you, we sought to carry out God's work utilizing the combined hands of the people of this synod.

My primary focus during this time was to assist the task force appointed by Bishop Wollersheim in developing and implementing a strategy to achieve the goal of funding full-time campus ministry at NIU. The synod council established the goal for this effort at \$200,000 to be achieved by 2010.

Why a goal of \$200,000? The Synod Council Executive Committee approved the goal of \$200,000 so that the increased cost of full-time pastoral leadership at NIU will be able to be incrementally added to the synod budget beginning with 2010, and that full-time campus ministry will be able to be supported from 2008 to 2010. Once the total cost of full-time campus ministry is able to be sustained by the synodical budget the balance of the designated funds (if any) will be forwarded to NIU Campus Ministry Board to build their small endowment.

In attempting to assist congregations and individuals in supporting this goal, the task course prepared a case statement of support and from this developed a brochure to share information and invite financial support. (Please see the brochure *Growing God's Loving and Caring Ministry* at NIU in your Assembly packet of information.)

If you or your congregation has not yet made a gift, or multiple-year commitment to this important effort, I urge you to do so today. We are nearly half way to our goal and your gift will make a difference. Also, since these gifts are part of designated giving to the synod, all the gifts are going to support the extension of this ministry that has been operating full-time, under the leadership of Pastor Diane Dardón.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the task for their commitments and effort: Dr. Jerry Johns, Chair, Ms. DiAnne Beynon, Pr. Diane Dardon, Pr. Mark Oehlert, Mr. Roger Primm, Dr. Denise Rode, Pr. Janet Wold, Mr. Josh Haka, and Ms. Amy Laurin.

I continue to support their work from my new position as Associate Director for Gift Planning with the ELCA Foundation in Chicago. I am through the ELCA Foundation also available to serve you and your congregation with gift plans, and the establishment and investment of Mission Endowment Funds. Please feel free to contact me at len.hoffmann@elca.org or toll free at 800-638-3522, ext. 2758.

The Rev. Dr. Len Hoffmann

Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission

What a joy and privilege it is to serve as the Director for Evangelical Mission in the Northern Illinois Synod! Called by the ELCA Church Council, I began this newly created position on December 1, 2008. So what is this position of Director for Evangelical Mission anyway?

This position is a new creation which comes from a new vision and reorganization of how we go about the work of ministry through the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission unit of our ELCA. This vision is entitled "Evangelizing Congregations Mission Plan". Basic to this vision is "Every person is a missionary, every pastor is a mission director, and every congregation is a mission station for the sake of the world."

This mission strategy and my position find its center around three “synodical mission tables”. These three “tables” have the following defined role in the “Evangelizing Congregations Mission Plan”. “The synodical mission tables will lead the development and implementation of mission plans in each synod with intentional engagement for new and renewed evangelizing congregations, mission support and stewardship education, and local mission strategies.” In our synod, we have defined the three mission tables and my role in the following ways.

The first table is Stewardship and Mission Support Strategy. In this ministry area, I will be working with the synod stewardship ministry team and others who gather around this table to provide resources, education, and tools to help congregations grow an intentional stewardship ministry as a part of the whole fabric of congregational ministry. The other major emphasis of this table is Mission Support (formerly benevolence). Mission Support includes the gifts given by congregations for the wider work of the church through our synod and our ELCA. Attention will be centered in telling the story of ministries that take place because of mission support, asking congregations to grow in their gifts for mission support, and thanking congregations for their partnership in ministry through their gifts for mission support. I follow Pastor Jeff Clements in this ministry area and I would like to thank him for helping provide a firm foundation of stewardship in the Northern Illinois Synod.

The second table is New and Redeveloping Congregations Strategy. Our synod Outreach Committee and other voices will comprise this ministry table. This portion of my portfolio will include the responsibilities of our former synod consultants in the areas of: Evangelizing Church, Mission Outreach, Urban and Multicultural Ministries, Mission Director, and Rural Ministry. Primary in this area of ministry will be the starting of new ministries, support of redeveloping ministries, and resourcing congregations in their ministry of outreach. Our thanks to Pastors Brent Dahlseng, Ron Voss, Michael Thomas, and Jonathan Black for their work as consultants in these important areas of ministry of our Northern Illinois Synod.

The third table is Mission Strategy. This table has the potential of being a transforming one in our understanding of contextual ministry and how we go about that in our congregations. This table will be composed of a variety of voices to discuss the questions of “What it means to be the church in the 21st century?” and “How can we resource our congregations in their call to be “centers of mission” and outreach in their ministry contexts?” The task of this table is to discuss and develop strategies that will help move us forward as missional congregations and missional people.

Although my call is from our Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, I serve on the staff of our Northern Illinois Synod as an assistant to Bishop Wollersheim and as Director for Evangelical Mission. This is a unique partnership between the synodical and churchwide expressions of our church. It is a living example of how we are the church together and partners in the mission of sharing the good news of our Lord Jesus Christ. I look forward to the many ways that we can be in mission together and proclaim boldly God’s life changing love in Jesus Christ through out our Northern Illinois Synod and beyond!

Thank you for all you do in your ministry!

Pastor Kurt Nordby

Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission

Northern Illinois Synod Stewardship Ministry Team

Our Stewardship Ministry Team has at the center of its ministry the delight of inviting individuals and congregations of our Northern Illinois Synod to experience the joy of being stewards of God’s abundance. To this end, the team has adopted a number of goals to engage in this ministry of invitation. These goals provide the structure and content of the resources that are provided to the congregations of our synod. They are as follows:

1. Invite all congregations to adopt basic Biblical stewardship principles and practices.
2. Encourage and teach congregations in the development of year-round stewardship ministry as apart of the overall plan for ministry in the congregation.
3. Raise and multiply stewards within our Northern Illinois Synod.
4. Develop a Mission Interpreter network to tell the stories of ministries supported by congregational gifts for Mission Support (formerly benevolence).
5. Develop an annual Mission Support consultation process.
6. Introduce resources to grow young stewards.
7. Invite every household to engage in faithful financial planning.

The team has provided a number of events and opportunities in our synod over the past year to provide resources such as “Ventures” to help grow congregational stewardship ministry. Resources have also been offered to grow stewardship leaders in our synod. An example would be “Money Leadership” for rostered and lay leaders.

Our thanks to Pastor Jeff Clements for his leadership in our synod stewardship ministry over these past years. If our team can be of any assistance to your congregation, let us know. And remember, stewardship is fun!

Partners in Ministry,

Russ Zeskey, Chair
Pr. Kurt Nordby, Director for Evangelical Mission

Northern Illinois Synod Youth Coordinator

It’s hard to believe another year is under our belts and we are assembled together again. It seems like I was just sighing from relief of finishing the assembly last year. Time really flies when there is plenty of fun to go around. The young people who participate on a synod level as the Lutheran Youth Organization are phenomenal and are a great pleasure to work with. I have to give a shout out to Peg Miller as well.

Last Spring the LYO has decided to get out and get to know their peers. They planned “Gatherings” in various conferences with the intention of doing the other conferences this upcoming school year. Those who attended the gatherings at Immanuel in Yorkville, Light of Christ in Algonquin, and St. John’s in Pearl City, had a great time. Of course, the schedule factor played a role and the attendance wasn’t what the LYO hoped for but the bonding was great. We have listened to the feedback and are scheduling events late on Sunday afternoons/evenings. This next year we will be partnering with Northern Illinois University’s Lutheran Campus Ministry and inviting the conferences to NIU for a cookouts, cards, coffee, karaoke, and whatever the high school and college students are interested in doing. The dates are on the LYO schedule for the next school year in you assembly packets.

The high school students aren’t the only ones having fun!! The junior high students also had their moment at Campus Ministry last fall. They are also a majority at the annual synod ski trip every Martin Luther King Junior Day, which had a record attendance this year of almost 400. It’s a goal of Merri Sevey, at Chestnut Mountain, and me to try and exceed the 400 mark.

We’ve also been invited to attend conference lock-ins, congregational overnights as a 30 hour famine. The LYO loves these invitations and continues to welcome them. High school students have probably been the

most affected by our culture of busyness and would love to make every single event but like the students in our congregation it's not always possible. Darn those ACT Prep classes and tests, proms, band, sports, work....!

I would again like to say another thank you to Peg Miller for coordinating the transportation to the National Youth Gathering this summer in New Orleans. This is a very complicated process and requires much flexibility and patience! I know most of us would not want the job so if you are going to the National Gathering and using the synod transportation, remember to say thank you to Peg as you see her around these next two days. Better yet if you see her in New Orleans by her a drink (shame on you! I'm referring to lemonade or an iced coffee) or you can visit with us on Saturday before the end of the National Youth Gathering. The ELCA, as of the writing, has not told us the time and place for the Northern Illinois Synod gathering place. I know I truly appreciate the hard work she has put into this planning. Thanks also to Nicole Billips and Liz Peregrine for taking time out of their summer to serve as representatives of our synod at the LYO Convention in Hattiesburg, MS immediately following the National Gathering. They will be taking buses straight from the conventions center straight to Hattiesburg. The Gathering will come quicker than we think and I look forward to seeing you again in New Orleans.

If this past year has gone quickly, this summer with all the events happening, will be done and over with before we know it. Thanks to all those who support the Northern Illinois Synod LYO and to the Synod Staff for all they do for us!!! See you around.

Mary Lasits