



## + Rev. Linda Pedersen, Synod Minister

*"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven" Ecclesiastes 3:1*

The time has come in my call to serve as a Southwestern Minnesota Synod Minister to announce that this will be my last year in this role. I have shared with Bishop Anderson and our Synod Council my intent to retire by the end of 2018. I hope this announcement, as we are preparing for our Synod Assembly, will give Bishop Jon and other synod leaders appropriate time to seek and call a person by the end of this calendar year to serve on this awesome synod staff.

I am so grateful for this blessed and challenging call which began June 24, 2004. Little did I know at that time what a holy and demanding time it would be for 14 years. I certainly did not expect this call as a Synod Minister to be my longest as an ordained person, surpassing the 13 years I had spent in my previous parish ministry call.

There will be time in the future to reflect on the many opportunities this call has provided me and the variety of memories I will carry with me. But perhaps two brief thoughts capture the learning curve that faced me in the early days of my move from parish ministry to synod service. First, when I received this call it came with a cell phone, laptop computer, and a synod car, none of which I had previously used. My general conclusion was that this position would have me on the move all the time in a wide variety of places. I was rather clueless about what that would really mean. But it did not take long to discover this was very different from the rhythm of the parish, leaving me with a longing for just moving with a congregation through the events of the church year. On the other hand, I have been given the opportunity to work with a wide variety of congregations through transition of both joy and sorrow. This ministry has led to meeting incredibly faithful people living the good news of Jesus in so many different ways. Plus, I have been invited to preach in congregations across Southwestern Minnesota who gather weekly to hear the story of Jesus and apply it to their lives. My heart is overflowing with gratitude.

The second thought has to do with coming to Southwestern Minnesota after serving in the St. Paul Area Synod for the 25 years before 2004. I remember thinking I know generally about congregations, synods, and even our churchwide system. How different could it be to return to southwestern Minnesota, where I had served as a "Parish Worker" (with an emphasis on what we now call youth and family ministry) in Olivia. A big wakeup call came regarding differences when I had to ask my colleagues if they were talking about a pastor, congregation or town when using a simple name like Garfield, Kerkhoven, or even Marshall.

### Work with Conference Meetings

Over the years many things have changed and many things have stayed the same. I still work regularly with conferences in our synod. Since we moved from three to two Synod Ministers I have cared for the five conferences on the eastern side of our synod. Attending monthly conference meetings of rostered ministers is always a highlight for hearing about the highs and lows of our rostered leaders. The connections that are made at these meetings serve to make us a better church not only in the good times, but also in the challenging times.



## **Equipping Congregations**

We are always working on equipping congregations to do ministry in their local church. But when we say equipping, most people identify it with the annual Equipping Congregations Day held in February. This day of learning grew out of the work of our Equipping Congregations Board and now is planned and directed by an Equipping Congregations Day Planning Task Force.

This past February we had to put to work all of our advances in video conference technology. Although the weather in Minnesota was fine, our featured speaker, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, could not get here after a snowstorm in Chicago caused the cancelling of all flights. It was not perfect, but using video technology Bp. Eaton was able to speak to both groups at Bethel and Vinje in real time. The planning team managed the details well and attendees were understanding. However, the planning team is working on scheduling Bp. Eaton for a future equipping day.

### **Looking forward**

I am so proud of this synod. We have members of our Equipping Congregations Board working on planning opportunities for congregations to learn more about digital communication and how it is a tool for those outside our congregations to meet and hear about God's good news for their lives.

Our conferences continue to grow their relationship with our global companions in the Southeastern Diocese of the Lutheran Church in Southern Africa. We lift up the assets we each bring in sharing the presence of Jesus' love and care for all people.

We all lament changes that cause us to be concerned for the future of some of our congregations. But we also celebrate the ways God is calling us to equip the saints (yes you, the saints) for the ministries of today.

It has been my privilege to be a part of all of this and more with you!

