



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Synod Council and Executive Committee Report – 2019

“Everyday Spirituality”

“This is my command – be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” - Joshua 1:9

Command. Encouragement. Promise.

What a privilege to gather and work together as the Synod Council and the Executive Committee, remembering the purpose for our calling, and leaning into the trustworthy promise that we don't do anything apart from the love and abiding presence of the Lord our God.

While some of the Council and the Executive Committee's work appears to have a rhythm that is cyclical and routine, it is important to also recognize the time spent in worshiping, visioning, listening, asking probing questions, learning from one another, approving expenditures and supporting ministry opportunities, approving roster matters, and addressing challenging situations. Because the Council members and advisory members around the tables are generous with their gift of time and wisdom, and are committed to working faithfully to love and serve God and neighbor, it is a joy to assume this leadership role in the Synod.

“Lord, Be Glorified” is our theme hymn for this Synod Assembly. We strive to deepen the capacity of leaders and grow vital communities of faith in many expressions as followers of Jesus. As those elected to leadership in governance we pray that our conversations and decisions bring us more closely to these important aspirations and bring honor and glory to God.

In the past year, your Synod Council and Executive Committee have been engaged in these ways and have celebrated these highlights:

- Made the decision, after broad input and lengthy conversations, to not reduce the number of conferences, but rather, to retain the current ten conference structure.
- Used the gifts of technology in ever-increasing fruitful ways to communicate and teach, to hold committee meetings, and host webinars.
- Discussed possibilities to support and more deeply understand the challenges and joys of Campus Ministries.
- Celebrated the ways that Ministerial Excellence grants will continue to grow leaders in our midst to serve God's Church.
- Celebrated the awarding of the Phase Two Lilly Grant to support our leaders.

- Gave thanks for the many ways our Funding initiative, “Embracing God’s Mission + Equipping God’s People” allowed our synod to expand opportunities and ministry.
- Welcomed and said goodbye as transitions in staff occurred with Maggie Berggren (support staff), Pr. Linda Pedersen (Synod Minister, retirement), and Pr. Steve Cook (Synod Minister). Also gave thanks for Bp. Jon Anderson’s time away for sabbatical.
- Experimented and learned from the summer rental of space in the synod office building by Choices Camp.
- Took the Intercultural Development Inventory as a Synod Council with the hopes of gaining intercultural competency.
- Listened to and learned from ministry partners at every face-to-face Synod Council meeting; and received 1 to 1 conversation training and encouragement.
- Reviewed long range planning documents and historical policies, and made recommendations, as appropriate.

This list, while not exhaustive, gives a glimpse inside the varied responsibilities of the Synod Council and Executive Committee. With gratitude we commend our work to you, and ask for your continuing prayers as we steward all the gifts God has provided and engage in the mission from God that we share.

God’s peace and joy,
Gwen Arneson
Synod Vice President