



## **Director for Evangelical Mission (D.E.M.) Position Description** **July, 2021**

In addition to information available at the ELCA Job Board, the following background and position information will be helpful to applicants considering God's call to serve as D.E.M. in this synod.

The Southwestern Minnesota Synod is one of 6 ELCA Synods located in Minnesota, the third largest, and includes the territory of the southwestern quadrant of Minnesota.

The following synod mission statement describes our identity as a synod and guides the direction of our work in the future:

*The congregations and all the baptized who are the Southwestern Minnesota Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are claimed by this mission: God places us in cities, farms, and towns together under one prairie sky. The risen Christ surprises us with opportunities to plant God's Word in the world. Walking together in confidence, we cultivate life-giving congregations, nurture partner ministries, and cooperate in the life of the ELCA. By God's grace, together we have what we need.*

The Southwestern Minnesota Synod has 233 congregations. Some of these congregations are part of a multi-point ministry. Currently, the Southwestern Minnesota Synod includes two, three, four, and a six-point-point parish. There are 240 active ministers of word and sacrament and word and service on our roster. There are also candidates in the TEEM program and interns serving congregations. Additionally, there is a core of authorized lay worship leaders who lead worship in congregations without a called pastor.

A spring 2021 survey of leaders from across the synod generated the following interesting information:

- 138,000, or 78% of all people claimed by mainline denominations in this territory are ELCA Lutherans. Nearly 300,000 are not claimed by any denomination. There's outreach to do here!
- The population in the northeastern part of the synod is expected to grow from 2020-2025; average attendance at most congregations declined from 2017-2019.
- Most of the 409 survey respondents had a relatively good or very good understanding of the functions and activities of the synod office. Over half of those respondents are 61 or older.
- *Challenges* facing this synod: membership & attendance decline, rostered minister shortage, decline in relevance of the church in people's lives, busier lives with little time for the church, the church and our society will continue to deal with the effects of COVID-19.
- *Opportunities* before us: increasing ethnic diversity in SW MN, changing demographics, learning about anti-racism, technology, online presence of congregations, virtual dimension of church, community outreach, working outside the church's walls, working with non-ELCA groups, gospel message, Lutheran theology, spreading the Good News.
- *Work being done by congregations*: providing food for food pantries, providing free cooked dinners, providing personal items, providing clothing, community volunteering, neighborhood clean-up, God's Work. Our Hands. Sunday, proclaiming the gospel, preaching the Word, sharing the Good News.

Additional information drawn from the spring, 2021 survey of the synod is available at:

<https://swmnelca.org/2021/04/29/assessment/>

Over the course of the pandemic, synod staff and congregational leaders have engaged in conversations about new collaborations or partnerships. These conversations usually begin because congregations are seeking new ways to sustain ministries in areas of declining community populations, decreased church participation, and a clear need for more rostered ministries and lay leaders, particularly on the western side of the synod. As these conversations unfold, however, we can see the work of the Holy Spirit providing new imagination and energy, and the recognition that we are church together and better together.

The exciting ministry of the D.E.M. in this synod will include:

- Congregational Vitality
  - Equip congregations to assess their assets and strengthen the vitality of their future ministries in the context where God has placed them, whether in rural areas, small towns, or cities.
  - Activate the people of our congregations to grow a culture of outreach and evangelism.
  - Walk with our Synodically-Authorized Worshiping Communities (SAWCs) and Ethnic-Specific Ministries, supervise SAWC pastors, and manage ELCA grants that support these ministries:
    - Reborn Lao Luthera, Waite Park
    - House of Grace, Montrose
    - Iglesia Paz y Esperanza, Willmar
  - Continue development of a Coaching Network.
  - Convene and resource potential new collaborations among congregations and leaders, including the consideration of parish alignments.
  - Identify and invite congregations to participate in the Leadership for Faithful Innovation (LFI) initiative with Luther Seminary (Faith+Lead).
  - Enhance a sense of being church *together* among our congregations located in very different contexts: cities, farms, and towns.
  - Develop an ongoing team of people who address food insecurity locally and globally.
- Alignment with Future Church priorities: connecting with new, young, and more diverse people:
  - Equip congregations to activate all their participants to invite new people into the way of Jesus and experience community, justice, and love.
  - Give considerable attention to outreach and evangelism in this rural synod that includes many small churches.
  - Give considerable attention to the realities, challenges, and opportunities for outreach among smaller-sized congregations, which function differently than mid- and larger-sized congregations.
  - Explore the possibilities for new mission developments, particularly on the northeast corner of the synod, and in towns where there is a significant Latinx community.
  - Expand the implementation of principles in the Growing Young initiative.
  - Walk with and resource the Racial Justice Network.
  - Re-organize the synod Eco-faith Network.
- Partner with others within and beyond the synod in stewardship/generosity
  - Form a synod Stewardship and Generosity Team
  - Partner with leaders of the Gifts of Grace (Lilly Foundation, Inc.,) initiative
  - Collaborate with the synod bishop and staff in messages, practices, and communication on Mission Support.

Core competencies:

- supervisory experience
- hospitality
- cultural competency and adaptability
- interpersonal skills
- spiritual maturity
- self-differentiation
- excellent verbal & written communication
- project management
- grant forms preparation and management
- team orientation and team building
- proven leadership development
- creativity and innovation
- attention to detail management,
- technology skills, including ability to work in Microsoft programs (Word, Excel, Office365)

This position also will serve as part of the synod's rostered staff, program staff, and gifted administrative team. Other responsibilities will be determined based on the candidate's gifts and passions. Together with the bishop and other staff, the essential functions of the office will be evaluated and determined.

The synod office is located at Redwood Falls, MN, a community with a population of approx. 5,000, located in the center of the synod. Because this is an ELCA deployed staff position, there is flexibility in the DEM's place of residence, but the candidate will need to live in the synod and be located within comfortable drive-time to the synod office and synod congregations.