

Staff Reports to the Assembly

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I have heard many of my colleague's state that this is the best call in the church. Now that I am several months in, I have some sense of what they might mean. It means that Directors for Evangelical Mission are blessed with the opportunity to use our particular gifts of creativity and innovation to advance the gospel at the front edge of its proclamation. Like all ministries, there are a variety of tasks that need to be done. But it is true that much of my energy is focused working on the new, the possibilities. I am blessed. Thank you for the privilege of serving with you in this ministry.

So far, in my first six months in this call, I have discovered these key elements of this ministry: Congregational leadership is looking for support as they explore partnerships with their neighbors. Sometimes it is a renewal or adjustment of long-standing collaborations. More often it is exploring new opportunities for ministry together. The requests have come from some of our smallest faith communities, but they have also come from some of our largest. In all cases there has been a missional purpose at the heart of the conversation. I have been blessed to accompany and support these growing connections.

Congregational leadership is also looking for support as they imagine their futures. My observation is that the pandemic accentuated an already growing awareness that the church and its ministry are changing. Now as we emerge from the pandemic, some of our faith communities want to channel their renewed energy into futures that meet these changes. Again, these calls have come from a variety of faith communities, one who worships 25+ on a Sunday to one that worships several hundred on a weekend. I have also been blessed to accompany and support these conversations.

Two powerful ministries were initiated by my predecessors, Pastor Kathryn Skoglund and Bishop Dee Pederson, but their growth was delayed by the pandemic. Now I am privileged to pick them up, dust them off, and reengage them in a new world. Leadership for Faithful Innovation will empower rostered leaders and congregations with new emphases for their ministries. Research and experience have shown, that by simply shifting the paradigm with some small changes there can be a significant impact on the kingdom work of the community. The leadership team for this ministry has been assembled and the first stages of this ministry will be rolled out later this year.

The second ministry is coaching. This is an intentional accompaniment of rostered leaders and congregations in their ministries. Coaches are gifted and trained to be a sounding board and encouragement to their assigned leaders and faith communities. Sometimes it is simply a question asked at the right moment that changes the whole framework of discussion and the ministry it supports. Again, the key leader has been identified and we are gathering others to be a part of the ministry. We also hope to roll out the first stages of this ministry later this year.

Some of the boards, committees, networks that the DEM relates to continued to work during the pandemic and others suspended their ministries. I am now starting to reengage with the latter, but this will take time because we will be very intentional in this effort. We will not gather only for the sake of gathering, but we will gather around a specific, clearly identified focus for our ministry together. This focus will generate energy and activity.

I continue to support House of Grace and Reborn Lao as the new starts in our synod. I also continue to support Iglesia Paz y Esperanza as a strategic ministry of our synod. Each of these bring unique gifts to our larger church as well as each draws us into ministries that are not traditional strengths of our ELCA. We all grow from their ministry among us.

Thank you again for the privilege of serving in what is for me, as it is for my DEM colleagues, the best call in the church. It feels like it draws on my best gifts and strengths as I seek to proclaim the gospel. I hope and pray that each of us serves in the best call in the church, that place in which our strengths and our best gifts are called forth for the proclamation of the gospel. My wife is a hospital chaplain, and she feels that she serves in the best call in the church. My brother is a scientist and he says the same. 1 Corinthians 12 echoes in my heart as I share this with you. As you have time, read it and reflect on the gifts that you bring to your best call in the church. I am blessed. Thank you!

Shalom,
Pastor Troy Pflibsen

*"For we are God's servants, working together,
you are God's field, God's building." - 1 Corinthians 3:9*