

Report of the Office of the Bishop

Bishop Wayne N. Miller

Early in my term as bishop, I used the image of a tree to describe a dynamic of growth and balance in the life of the church. This same image can provide a useful instrument for communication and accountability in our ongoing work.

Worship

Since the last meeting of the synod council, virtually every weekend has provided an opportunity for me to preach in a different congregation. For the moment, I am simply responding to requests to preach as they come into the office. Over time, I hope to be more proactive in choosing preaching sites so that I know I am balancing my time among the various geographic, cultural, and economic expressions of the synod.

In addition to weekend visits, we have held our first synodical teaching/preaching/worship event, on March 30, 2007. Synod pastoral staff was installed at that time. I also preached and presided at the Maundy Thursday Eucharist at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

Ministry

Good news for those within the church primarily takes the form of pastoral care and ministry support for professional leaders and congregations.

We are working diligently to find practical ways to streamline the process of connecting congregations looking for leaders with leaders looking for calls. This process can be exasperatingly slow for everyone concerned. The churchwide office Program Unit for Vocation and Education is close to launching a web-based mobility forum that will allow leaders open access to sites looking for leaders. We are working in our office to explore whether similarly open access for call committees to see leader snapshots is advisable.

We are also in the process of gathering leadership and congregational renewal resources that we can make available to the people of our synod. This will be an ongoing expression of our service to the synod.

We have begun the promised goal of convening leadership tables for various groups of leaders within the life of our church. I have met for worship and conversation with rostered women, interim pastors, churchwide staff rostered in the synod, and a meeting is being organized for pastors of congregations with 50 or fewer adults at worship. The next table for me to organize will be for lead pastors of larger congregations. Other staff members are also working on convening leadership tables.

Mission

Good news for those beyond the church, takes a number of different forms and expressions.

I have met with our African American Strategy Team, with our Asian Outreach Strategy Team and with our Latino Outreach Strategy Team to familiarize myself

with the mission work they are already doing and to begin to explore a vision for the future.

In addition to these culture-specific outreach strategies, we have begun to explore other creative ways to reach out to our urban neighborhoods, and we continue to work on developing a new traditional mission congregation in the Elgin area.

Mission work, for me as bishop, also includes developing organizational, ecumenical and interfaith relationships:

- I was one of the consecrating bishops for the new bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Chicago.
- I served as teacher and keynote speaker for a recent gathering of our Synodical Women's Organization with their Roman Catholic counterparts.
- I have had introductory conversations with both Mayor Richard Daley and Francis Cardinal George which opened several doors to my own imagination of how to work more productively and visibly with each.
- I presented a program on Domestic Violence and the Church to an ecumenical gathering at St. Luke's in Park Ridge.
- I have also begun to build relationships with a wide variety of ecumenical leaders through the Chicago Council of Religious Leaders.

Within Lutheran circles:

- I am serving on the search committee for a new CEO of Lutheran Social Services of Illinois as Pr. Fred Aigner prepares for retirement.
- On May 14, at 6:00 pm I taught a seminar for ELCA members of the Advocate Health Care board and its local hospital boards. The subject will be Christian Ethics in Health Care Administration. Members of the Synod Council also attended the event
- I am serving on the executive committee of the LSTC Board and on the seminary's Strategic Planning Task Force.
- As part of my responsibility to the Churchwide structure, I am a member of the Multicultural Ministries Program Committee, the Region 5 bishops' representative to EOCM for mission development strategy and for the development of a plan for identifying and preparing leaders for the diverse ministry settings we are trying to create throughout the church. I am also a member of the bishops' committee on Ministry Among People Living in Poverty.

Stewardship

We are still in the early stages of planning, and envision a comprehensive strategy for stewardship development. I was a presenter at the spring stewardship event held on April 26 at LSTC. Steve Homberg and I are also working on a way of building a broad coalition of stewardship storytellers within the synod to make visits to congregation councils to work together on ways to strengthen stewardship on every level throughout the synod.

Two stewardship goals that I have at the present time are:

- To explore the development of a synodical philanthropy network. Members of this group would be persons of means who are looking for an opportunity to work with others on specific mission projects.

- As an expression of the churchwide Blue Ribbon Panel, plan for stewardship development. I will be exploring a plan for talking with leaders about their own personal stewardship.

The Rev. Carol Breimeier – Pastoral Associate to the Bishop

I want to start by thanking the bishop and the synod council for giving me this opportunity and entrusting me with this ministry. A big thanks also to the other pastoral associates and the rest of the staff for their generosity in answering my endless questions that began December 5 and have scarcely slowed down since.

I have been getting to know pastors and congregations in the conferences to which I relate (North, Northwest, Northeast) along with starting to learn about renewal efforts and successes in congregations throughout the synod. I am developing a “renewal resourcing” plan intended to make the synod office a solid source of information, advice, and referrals to connect leaders and congregations with consultants, coaches, workshops, print materials, and, of course, each other to strengthen their renewal work.

In addition, I worked with the Fund for Mission Board, which gave me an opportunity to see the creative and ambitious ways some of our congregations are working to reach out in their communities. I prepared a First Call Theological Education event in April on the Emerging Church movement. And—along with Pr. Garfias—I work with the Accountable Discipleship Team (former the Natural Church Development Team) to develop coaches and increase the availability of coaching for leaders and congregations in the synod. A Coaching 101 training event is planned for late June.

The Rev. Héctor Garfias – Pastoral Associate to the Bishop

First, I want to thank the synod council and Bishop Miller for their trust and for affirming my ministry. I understand this call as a call of the Lord and my commitment is to serve faithfully. I began as a full-time Associate to the Bishop on November 16, 2007. My responsibilities with the synodical community changed and open a new array of possibilities for my personal learning, growth, and service to the Lord through the synod office. My new areas of ministry are Mission, Discipleship, and the West and Southwest conferences.

- As mission director, I am working with the synod’s outreach team on developing a synodical mission strategy. It will include gathering mission-minded people to be the Outreach Team, which will function as a team that promotes relationships among leaders in the conferences. The goal is have a network of mission tables working creatively in partnership to identify fields for new missions. The outreach team of the synod will be resourcing and supporting the mission efforts of congregations and conferences.
- My role as Mission Director has been and will continue promoting missional leadership and providing resources and guidance for the mission processes connected with the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission (EOCM) unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), as well as

strengthening the relationship and partnership between the synod and the EOCM unit.

- I am working with the leadership of the Latino and Asian communities to resume the work on their ministry strategies. The Asian community met on May 6, 2008, and the Latino community on May 8, 2008.
- I have been working with the Rev. Carol Breimeier in the area of transformation/renewal of congregations, coaching, and Natural Church Development, and with the Rev. Ray Legania in the area of African-American ministries.
- I have been working with mission developers on creating a mission developer's table as a way to create a space for them to share their experiences and to support one another.
- In the area of discipleship I have been working with the synod's Discipleship team on creating a vision for the development of a ministry plan for discipleship in our synod. One of the initial questions to answer is: "How does the Metropolitan Chicago Synod understand the call to make disciples?" The team is looking to go from an event-organizing- team, to a visionary resourcing team for the synod.
- In general, the last six months have been a time of transition and learning. Building relationships and getting to know the territory, processes, and people are an important part of the transition. As I become acquainted with all of them, I will focus on working with the teams and groups I relate to, Outreach, Discipleship, and the non-Anglo ministries.

I believe that God has given us the freedom to release all the gifts we have received through the Spirit. I believe that it is time for us to put a new wine in the wineskin; we are working with awareness that new wine needs new wineskins. I want to ask the synod assembly to pray and to let the Spirit takes to a journey. *"... but new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved " Matthew 9:17.*

The Rev. Cynthia K. Hileman – Pastoral Associate to the Bishop

These first months of Bishop Miller's term have been ones of acclimating - first myself to a new team and second assisting the new members of the team to the workings of the synod office.

It is a pleasure and privilege to serve as a bishop's associate with responsibilities for leadership development. I continue to work with the Ministry Committee in overseeing the candidacy process for people who are called to rostered ministry in the ELCA, the Justice Team, the Antiracism Team and the congregations and rostered people who serve in the Central and Nearwest Conferences. I am proud of the Environmental Working Group and all those who planned and led the two Green Congregation Workshops we offered in September 2007 and April 2008.

A new and primary focus of these first months has been information gathering from leaders in order to create a strategy for leadership development. To that end, on March 4, 2008, at the Churchwide office, Bishop Miller and I gathered the rostered women to hear first hand their experience as leaders. The morning began with worship in the chapel with Bishop Miller preaching, Carol Breimeier assisting and

me presiding. Bishop Miller then led a leadership-focused conversation with the participants.

I also initiated and lead a "Big Picture" conversation with the synod program staff, the first of which was held March 19, 2008, where we began to develop a five-year plan which will help guide Bishop Miller's term as bishop. The priorities that were identified for further delineation and focus are multicultural, stewardship, story telling, and leadership. My goal is that by Thanksgiving 2008, we will have a five-year strategy with goals to guide these next five years.

A word of thanks to the synod staff especially my trusted 'right hand,' Erma Alvarez, for her partnership.

The Rev. Raymond Legania – Pastoral Associate to the Bishop

As part-time Associate to the Bishop, my responsibilities include The African American/Black Strategy, the South Conference, preaching, installations, and other duties as assigned by the bishop.

I attend the monthly meeting of the African American/Black Strategy Team. Among other responsibilities, the team evaluates ministries that receive financial support from the synod and the ELCA's Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission unit. A major event of this team is an African American celebration at the African American DuSable Museum in February each year.

During the Season of Lent, the team sponsored Lenten services focusing on GLBT.

Training in becoming Reconciled in Christ congregations took place April 10, April 24, and May 8, 2008.

The following ministries have been received as Synodically Authorized Worshiping Communities (SAWC) of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

- a. Love, Faith & Hope Church
- b. Upper Room Ministries International Church
- c. Kings Ministries (an African National Eritrean Group)
- d. Oromo Evangelical Church of Chicago
- e. Reformation Swahili Ministry

Mr. Jeff Drake – Program Associate to the Bishop

I would like to begin by thanking the synod council, Bishop Miller, the synod staff, and the leaders and members of congregations within the synod for the continuing privilege of working with you. My portfolio includes public media relations, communications, partner ministries, ecumenical relations, and coordination of the companion synod program.

Communications

The synod is completing a communications audit that is an objective examination of all communications within the synod. Kristi Bangert, Executive Director for Communication Services, ELCA, is completing the audit that will help determine the future scope and shape of synodical and public media relations.

Partner Ministries

Lutheran Congregations for Career Development (LCCD) has been dissolved, and is no longer in operation. Lutheran Family Mission ceased operations last year (2007).

Companion Synod

I have been visiting congregations explaining the synod's relationship with our companion synod – The Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa. More information about this ministry is available online at <http://www.mcselca.org/companion/index.html>.

Mr. Steven Homberg – Associate to the Bishop

Stewardship Development and Oversight

I serve on the bishop's staff, as the synod's business manager, and as the shared stewardship staff person with the Evangelical Outreach and Congregational Mission (EOCM) unit of the ELCA. I am responsible for stewardship development and oversight in the synod. In addition to other stewardship-related activities, I facilitated the development of the annual spring stewardship conference, *Stores to Tell & Gifts to Share*, held at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago on April 26, 2008.

My short-term goals are to:

- organize a synod stewardship strategy steering team to develop a synod steward-ship strategy that encompasses synod goals for mission support, as well as, stewardship consultation and education programs for synod congregations;
- present a draft version of a synod strategy at the 2009 assembly;
- present for vote a final version of a synod strategy at the 2010 assembly;
- develop a Mission Interpreters (storytellers) network throughout the synod to share stories of mission being carried out globally, nationally, synodically, and locally by all expressions of the ELCA (God's Work. Our Hands.); and
- offer Money Management workshops for rostered and lay church leaders that focus on household finances (Giving, Saving, Spending, Debt Management, Financial Life Planning), and understanding money within the congregational family system.