



Northeastern Ohio Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

NORTHEASTERN OHIO SYNOD
BISHOP'S REPORT
MAY 15-16, 2015
SYNOD ASSEMBLY AKRON, OHIO

...but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

[Philippians 3:13b-14]

Welcome to the 2015 Northeastern Ohio Synod Assembly!

For the third consecutive year, a different bishop is writing this report. A year ago, I sat in the assembly with most of you, fully expecting that I would be back at this year's gathering in the same role – as a voting member of the assembly and pastor of the congregation I had been faithfully serving.

The Holy Spirit apparently had different ideas.

A lot of change has taken place in the last 12 months:

- Not only do you have a (not so) new bishop, but a new assistant to the bishop, a smaller staff overall, and other former staff members fulfilling new roles in their service to the synod and to the wider church.
- The role of our conference deans is being redefined so as to make up for the reduction in synod staff.
- We are being served by an interim Director for Evangelical Mission while our called DEM is on disability leave.
- There have been changes in the governance of the synod as we have a new secretary and a new interim vice-president.
- We are smaller as a synod by one congregation and we now number 179 parishes.

We were also affected adversely by sudden, unexpected misfortunes and tragedies:

- In August of 2014, a fire destroyed First Lutheran Church in Lorain.
- In November of 2014 and in January of this year, we were saddened by the deaths of two active pastors.

On a more joyful note, two new pastors were ordained last August and are serving in our synod. We also welcome three more new candidates who will be graduating from their respective

seminaries this May and will hopefully be called to congregations in Northeastern Ohio in the coming months.

All of this has had an impact on how we do ministry in our synod. It is challenging us to become more creative, more imaginative, more resourceful in making Christ known to those who may not yet know him.

Yes, change is unsettling. Change is disturbing. Change is frightening. Except that, when it comes to the church, we have one constant – Jesus Christ. As the writer of Hebrews states, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” [Hebrews 13:8]

The church that trusts in Jesus Christ as its foundation will stand steadfast against whatever adverse changes may challenge it. And as we press on together as a synod, the words of the apostle Paul (see above) in his letter to the church at Philippi become our mission for the congregations of Northeastern Ohio – to remain focused on revealing the love of God to the world.

I want to close by thanking God for the people who walk alongside me daily in this task of ministry as pastor to the people of God in Northeastern Ohio:

- We welcome the Rev. Karl Biermann, successor to Deaconess Judy Hoshek, who retired in December. Pastor Biermann comes to us from the Southwestern Texas Synod, and has hit the ground running in his primary responsibility of overseeing the call process and working with congregations in transition.
- Karen Kaufmann continues faithfully as Resource Center Director and fulfills other duties as assigned.
- Helen Harms is on loan to us from the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod as Interim Director for Evangelical Mission while the Rev. Terrance Jacob is on disability.
- Although the Rev. Laurie Miller and Associate in Ministry Mary Ann Schwabe are no longer synod staff, they continue on as non-stipendiary (contract) employees, coordinating the Candidacy Process and the Congregational Resource Team respectively.
- Joy Hacker keeps our finances in order as Synod Accountant.
- Sony Gilroy serves as Executive Assistant to the Bishop and manages Electronic Communications.
- Kathy Lender is the pleasant voice you hear on the other end of the telephone line when you call the synod office. She also edits our Unified Newsletter and has taken on the additional role of synod statistician from Charlene Saurman, who also retired in December.

Peace and Blessings,



The Rev. Abraham D. Allende
Bishop