

Transformational ministry in Nebraska

Messiah Lutheran Church in Grand Island recently completed all four trainings of the Transformational Ministry process in the Nebraska Synod. As part of that process, they applied for and received a \$2,500 Congregational Renewal Grant to help achieve some of their mission goals. The congregation was extremely grateful to the synod and the Outreach Table and felt blessed to share in ministry together with their fellow Nebraskans.



Messiah Lutheran Church in Grand Island.

As part of their Transformational Ministry Program, members of Messiah and the community were asked, “What do you see as the needs of our community and how do you think we can help?” From these questions, the Transformational Ministry Team presented seven missions and a purpose statement to the congregation for adoption. They are excited to report that all seven missions were adopted with their purpose statement being “Feed God’s Sheep!”

One of those missions is to expand their 11-year-old Saturday Supper ministry. Over the last couple of years, the amount of meals they serve has increased from 60 to between 100 to 150 per week. With the ever-increasing number of homeless in the Grand Island area, this need will also grow. Messiah’s men’s group is now delivering hot meals to those who are unable to come to their facility. The group anticipates that this service will continue to grow exponentially as well.

The congregation is currently converting three rooms to create a food and hygiene pantry, clothes closet and additional storage for the

these pantries and Saturday Supper. They are painting the rooms, installing shelving and racks, and adding additional freezer space for food storage.

Together, as a community of faith, they are bringing to life the gospel message by embracing the new missional purpose to “Feed God’s Sheep.” Not only will they, through God’s grace, help reduce hunger in their area, but they will also meet the needs for clothing and hygiene products. This group is touching and changing lives one at a time. They look forward to sharing more exciting news with you in the future as the Spirit continues to bless and lead.

If you would like to learn more about Transformational Ministry, visit nebraskasynod.org. A “Part One” training is being offered in Lincoln on Saturday, Aug. 4, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. To apply for a Congregational Renewal Grant, go to nebraskasynod.org/quicklinks/renewal-grant-for-congregations.html. 4

Hope. Connect. Go.

These three principles guide and inspire the ministries of the Nebraska Synod through its Strategic Mission Vision Plan 2015-2020:

- **HOPE**, as we focus on the living hope in Christ to which we are born anew in the midst of a world filled with fear and cynicism.
- **CONNECT**, which flows from our ecclesiological foundation as members of the body of Christ as we live out our unity as a witness in the midst of a world fractured by division.
- **GO**, which flows from God's mission and the Spirit sending us into the world to make disciples, serve, heal, reconcile. We are a people sent to go into all the world!

As part of exploring our identity and purpose in **HOPE**, a four-year emphasis engages congregations across the synod to grow in understanding of what it means to be the church. Each yearlong theme is launched at synod assembly and resources for a study series are developed for the following Lenten season.

We Are Church (2016-17) invited congregations to explore the church as one, holy, catholic and apostolic. A dinner church model, or some modification thereof, was part of Lenten worship in many congregations. *We Are Lutheran* (2017-18), explores the five *solas*, or teachings, associated with the Protestant Reformation. Future themes include *We Are Church Together* (2018-19) and *We Are Church for the Sake of the World* (2019-20).

HOPE is also the guiding force behind the Transformational Ministry process that was developed for congregations seeking new ways to move forward with energy and vitality, linking God's gifts to them with God's vision for the world. Prayer services shared with the Roman Catholic Archdiocese-Omaha and Reformation commemoration services held throughout the synod in the year of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation were signs of the hope we have through our ecumenical relationships and shared baptismal faith.

CONNECT goals include a deepening of awareness of vocation and call that all have in

baptism, and strengthening care and support for congregations and leaders in the call process. Resources are available to wrap the call process in prayer and spiritual direction, listening intentionally for where God might be leading before, during and after that time of transition. Other ongoing **CONNECT** goals include redefining the roles of cluster deans as they help make connections in their areas; boundaries training and other resources that encourage healthy leaders; communications that connect, inform and equip members for ministry through print, electronic and social media; creation of coalitions and networks around shared purposes and passions; and intentional, healthy conversations around difficult topics and shared ministry concerns.

GO encompasses goals for lifelong faith formation, stewardship and evangelism. Several congregations participated in a yearlong initiative that resulted in a variety of creative cross-generational faith formation experiences and relationships between congregations and communities. Immanuel Vision Foundation grants have provided for the positions of synod stewardship director and development director, whose work continues to focus on giving that grows out of the joy and gratitude for what we first receive from our generous God. A Young Adult working group has produced a four-part video series, *Generation: Together*, to generate meaningful faith conversations between members of all ages. The Senior Lutherans in Ministry (S.L.I.M.) working group has been in conversation with the young adults and is working to form a pilot group to engage with these videos. This S.L.I.M. group looks forward to exploring possibilities for ministry by, with and for seniors.

There is much happening as the Nebraska Synod Strategic Mission Vision Plan provides a framework for us as church together to **Hope, Connect and Go**. Acknowledging that the Spirit is present and active among us and allowing space for what "bubbles up," the plan will continue to evolve and respond to what God is doing and calling us to be as God's people who are called to share the good news of God's love and grace for all. **L**

2018 Nebraska Synod Assembly:

Building on the Foundation

For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building. According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Each builder must choose with care how to build on it. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:9-11).

We are excited to have you join us at the 2018 Nebraska Synod Assembly, May 31-June 2, at the Younes Center in Kearney. As we gather for this year's assembly to discern key actions, you will be participating in building the foundation for the Nebraska Synod's future. Among the significant matters that will be covered is the election of the bishop, who will serve the synod for the next six years.

It's important to remember that the election of a bishop is a spiritual process. Both the nominees and the assembly will need the Spirit's guidance to understand the synod's current and future needs. Please hold the synod in prayer as we prepare for this process.



Past Nebraska Synod Assembly voting members.

For the pre-assembly activities, we will be hosting a hearing on the women and justice social statement draft on Thursday from 2:30 to 4 p.m. Then a bishop candidate meet-and-greet will take place at 6:30 p.m. And we will enjoy music by the talented Jonathan Rundman throughout the weekend.

The assembly will officially begin Friday at 9 a.m. with opening worship and will close Saturday at 3 p.m. with worship. This year we will hear from William "Bill" Horne II, ELCA vice president. We will also host a Partners in Ministry recognition banquet on Friday evening. As in past assembly events, we will offer a 5K run/walk and a ministry fair on Saturday morning for attendees and guests who are interested in participating.

In keeping with the theme of "Building a Foundation," there will be the transition from "We Are Lutheran" to "We Are Church Together." We will also preview the completed *Generation: Together* videos.

In addition, we are inviting all worship centers, serving arms and organizations that are attending to participate in our assembly project. This year we will build a wood foundation cross. If you would like to take part in the project, please bring an 8-inch two-by-four wooden block, decorated to represent your congregation or organization as part of the Nebraska Synod.

A full schedule and additional details are available on the Nebraska Synod website (nebraskasynod.org). If you have any questions about the 2018 assembly, contact office@nebraskasynod.org.

We hope to see you there. ✚

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

What a year we experienced together within the Nebraska Synod in 2017! Who could have imagined what God would do in 365 days as a result of individual donors?

More than \$120,000 was given to the Annual Fund this year. Over \$65,000 was contributed to scholarships and grants to help support the 25 Nebraska Synod candidates currently preparing for ministry. And nearly \$67,000 was given for Mission Field Nebraska to fund growing outreach among recent arrivals to Nebraska and innovative service to those in need. Not to mention the immense support and impact that an additional \$92,000 given to this year's synod endowment fund has had, and will continue to have, on our ministries and work here in Nebraska.

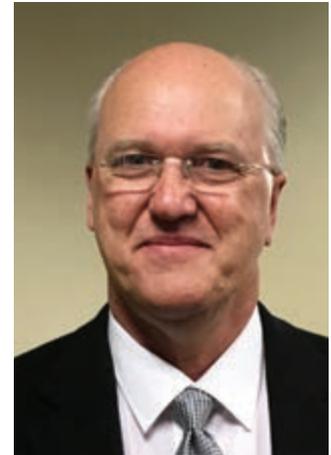
And that's just a small part of what was given!

When donors call and say, "God has blessed me and I want to give to make a difference," my heart overflows. As I share with them the opportunities that best fit their giving focus and they say, "That's the one, I want to give to that," it's a true joy. I love hearing from people who want to make a difference and give to others. At the synod office we are working hard to provide information and opportunities for these donors to give where it means the most to them.

***We don't have to do this;
we get to do this.***

We get to do this because of people like you who generously invest in this incredible mission. Thank you. Your giving directly changes lives for eternity.

2018 looks to be another year of change and challenge! We continue to look for ways to respond to the pastor shortage across the state, to guide individuals toward discernment, and to raise up leaders within the church. We are also continuing to promote and support increased spiritual awareness among our pastors and church members.



Ted Asay, director of development.

There are wonderful opportunities for growth within our Parish Ministry Associate program, Spiritual Direction Institute and leadership development efforts. However, this growth can only happen with your help! Will you join myself, the leadership of the Nebraska Synod and many others in a generous gift of \$100, \$200, \$500 or more this year? Gifts to the Annual Fund support the broad spectrum of mission-minded activity within the synod for the year and a gift to the endowment fund provides ongoing support for many years to come.

Thank you again for being a vital part of the ministry of the Nebraska Synod! ✚

*Ted Asay,
Director of development, Nebraska Synod*