



## 2019 Nebraska Synod Assembly:

# “Disciples for All the World

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).*

We are excited to have you join us at the 2019 Nebraska Synod Assembly, May 30-June 1, at the Younes Center in Kearney. As we gather for this year's assembly to discern key actions, you will participate in becoming disciples for all the world. Business will include the election of several committee members and approval of the 2020 synod budget.

Several workshops will be offered during the pre-assembly. Some will cover the topics of leadership enrichment and development, reconciling works, refugee quilts and stewardship.

The stewardship workshop is a continuation of the one held in summer 2018. “What's Next—Going Deeper Embracing Stewardship” will feature the Rev. Charles Lane and Grace Duddy Pomroy as keynote speakers. The event, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., will consist of a devotion, presentation, a panel discussion and lunch. It is free and open to the public. For more information or to register, go to [nebraskasynod.org](http://nebraskasynod.org) and click on the event spotlight.

The annual “Partners in Ministry Banquet” will be held Thursday evening. This recognition dinner honors rostered ministers achieving milestones in their service. We will also honor a special guest who has been a noteworthy partner of the Nebraska Synod over the years.



Opening worship from a previous Nebraska Synod Assembly.

The assembly will officially begin Friday, May 31, at 9 a.m. with opening worship and will end Saturday, June 1, at 3 p.m. with closing worship.

This year's assembly will focus on global ministry. Attendees will hear from keynote speaker Bishop Arthur Shoo from Tanzania. In keeping with the theme, there will be the transition from “We Are Church Together” to “We are Church for the Sake of the World.”

As in previous years, attendees can participate in the 5K run/walk for healthy leaders on Saturday morning. That morning will also offer participants the chance to attend additional workshops, which will replace the annual ministry fair. Information from synod partners and committees will still be available to those interested in learning more about the different ministries of the synod.

A full schedule and additional details are available on the Nebraska Synod website ([nebraskasynod.org](http://nebraskasynod.org)). If you have any questions about the assembly, contact [office@nebraskasynod.org](mailto:office@nebraskasynod.org). We hope to see you there. ✚

# The 5 Ws of the Theological Education Initiative

In 2019, the Nebraska Synod steps out into a new venture for preparing and forming leaders for the church. The Theological Education Initiative (TEI), an innovative approach to making seminary-level theological education accessible to all, will launch this summer. This initiative will allow Nebraska Synod members to step into new adventures in deepening their faith.

## What is it?

The TEI is a new way to engage in education around the Bible, theology and ethics, Lutheran Confessions, church history, worship, teaching, stewardship and evangelism, spirituality and community. The courses will be taught by pastors right here in Nebraska who have degrees in these particular areas. Courses will be taught on a master's degree level. There will be all the accoutrements of this level of coursework: a syllabus, required and suggested reading, and assignments to be completed before and after the class meets.

## Who can participate?

Anyone in the Nebraska Synod is welcome to participate. The courses will be geared to those who are interested in becoming a rostered minister and want to dip their toes into seminary-type coursework. Some courses may be compatible with the completion of the Parish Ministry Associate program. Also welcome are those lay leaders in congregations who are anxious to dig deeper into these subject areas in a more formalized manner.

## Where will this take place?

TEI will be a movable feast. It will move to a variety of places in the synod to accommodate those traveling from the far corners of Nebraska. Organizers also want to take advantage of the different settings Nebraska has to offer as

participants engage in active learning. TEI will hold its inaugural course in the center of the synod by meeting in Kearney.

## When will these courses be offered?

We will begin by offering two courses a year: one in July and the other in January. The first courses are scheduled for July 24-July 27, 2019 (at First Lutheran Church in Kearney) and Jan. 5-11, 2020. You will receive information from the instructor on readings and assignments to be completed before the class meets.

Our time together is intended to be very integrated. There will be relationship-building and worship. There will be time and space for spiritual formation as you engage the subjects at hand. Being together in person is important as that is how we build collegial relationships!

## Why is the TEI important?

I am glad you asked! You may have heard that there is a decline in leaders for ministries in the Nebraska Synod and across the ELCA. TEI is one way of addressing this deficit. It is an opportunity for those who would like to engage in theological education to do so without having to leave Nebraska. It gives folks a chance to experience what taking seminary classes might be like. TEI also helps those who are working toward becoming a rostered minister through TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries) to complete some of their coursework close to home. Finally, it is an opportunity to equip lay leaders to share the gospel in their congregations and communities.

Interested in joining us for the inaugural class? Contact the Rev. Michelle Carlson, TEI registrar, at [mcarlson@firstlutherankearney.org](mailto:mcarlson@firstlutherankearney.org) or 308-237-5544.

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# A life-changing trip and program

By Marty Malley

My first trip to Tanzania 10 years ago changed the trajectory of my life, especially my faith life. I want to share the story of a young Tanzanian man named Jonathan. I'm humbled to know him. Despite being born into enormous challenges, Jonathan is a teacher to all of us. I came to know him through Building a Caring Community (BCC), a joint project of Mosaic (a Nebraska Synod ministry partner) and the Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania—our companion of 25 years.

Children with intellectual disabilities come into the world at a huge disadvantage in Tanzania. They are often viewed as a curse, as some sort of punishment for their parents' sins. Often they are just hidden away or abandoned. There are no government-provided services for them. For many years, BCC has been providing parish-based centers where children with disabilities can receive the professional services they need to flourish. For more information about this program, see [mosaicinfo.org/what-we-do/international-outreach/tanzania](https://mosaicinfo.org/what-we-do/international-outreach/tanzania).

Jonathan has been participating in BCC since he was a child and continued into the young adult program. Usually that program focuses on giving youth basic skills such as farming, but Jonathan was sure he was being called to pastoral work. Despite great reticence from all parties, the BCC staff was able to place him in a congregation to shadow a pastor.

Nobody could have predicted the impact Jonathan would make because of his fearless evangelism. He can't read but carries his Bible everywhere and can recite many passages and prayers. He loves leading people in prayer. He visits the sick and homebound



Jonathan from the Building a Caring Community program.

with the pastor and has been good at encouraging people to come to church. Jonathan graduated from the BCC program in 2017 and is now employed by that same church as its assistant to the pastor.

Instead of being isolated because of his disability, Jonathan is a contributing member of his community. The BCC program gave him skills to be an independent and successful adult. Christ is fully formed in him. I think Jonathan lets the Spirit work in him without the constraints of fear or discouragement that many of us let get in the way.

Mosaic is one of several Serving Arms ministry partners of the Nebraska Synod. To learn more about any of these ministries or to make a gift in support of their work, designate a contribution at [nebraskasynod.org](https://nebraskasynod.org) (click on "Give Now"). And, by all means, if you have never been there, consider a visit to Tanzania by joining a Nebraska Synod "Vision Trip." It may change your life. ✚

**Marty Malley** is the Tanzania ministries coordinator.

## “ALL”—small word, big challenge

By Bishop Brian Maas



Bishop Brian Maas

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations ...*  
(Matthew 28:19)

If only Jesus had sent us to make disciples of *some* nations, or even *most* nations, or the *right* nations or “the nations *just like you*,” my life would be so much more comfortable and my job so much easier.

God is always so doggone generous, expansive—gracious. And I’m so ... human.

But Jesus didn’t say, “Go and make excuses.” He said, “Go and make disciples,” disciples of *all* nations.

If we’re going to do that, we have to be disciples ourselves, disciples *for* all nations. That’s how the theme of this year’s Nebraska Synod Assembly was derived. “Disciples For All Nations” describes our focus and intent for our annual family reunion. This year especially we’re expanding opportunities to learn new strategies, to identify new resources and to try new things as all of us in our own congregations try to be disciples and to make disciples.

Workshops before and during the assembly, as well as speakers, musicians and activities throughout, will remind us of who we are as God’s chosen, and inspire and equip us to live as God’s chosen.

Remember that one doesn’t need to be a voting member to attend—*all* are invited to participate, to learn, to worship, to participate, to grow.

Whether at the assembly or in our congregations or our communities, the invitation and the challenge stands: *all*. In the same way that I’m individually way more attuned to what separates

me from others, which limits my world to “some,” humanity as a whole and our culture in particular are bombarded by efforts to divide, to separate, to exclude, to tear apart.

When we are driven to focus on our differences, we are vulnerable to having our fears stoked, our self-protection energized, our behaviors manipulated. Advertisers, politicians, preachers and even children know this. Which is why God chose to become one of us, to show us a different way.

Rather than remaining distant to let us continue without the hope of knowing peace, rather than simply destroying us and starting over, God chose to surrender *all* that it means to be God, to empty *all* of that divinity, to become *all* human, to experience *all* of our lives—joy, despair, grief, surprise, curiosity, disappointment. And having told us and shown us what it could mean to live without dividing “us” from “them,” he gave *all* in the humiliation, betrayal, pain and death of the cross so he could rise *all* whole, scars and *all*, to show us what happens when we are willing to follow him; when we can die to *all* that’s sin, to rise again *all* new.

This is the gift, the promise, the hope that *all* the world is looking for. We have it, and we need not hoard it. There’s plenty more where that good news came from.

So we strive to give it *all* away, *all* the time, to *all* who need to receive it.

To *all*.

*All*. ✞

“Go & Tell the Story” is the Nebraska Synod blog. To read more from Bishop Brian Maas and the Nebraska Synod staff, visit [nebraskasynod.blogspot.com](http://nebraskasynod.blogspot.com).