



# Minneapolis Area Synod

Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America

January 2018

Dear Friends in Christ,

I am so grateful for you – and for all our communities of faith that share the good news of Christ in word and deed. We often hear of the church's decline. As I visit our synod's congregations, ministries, and partners, I see remarkable signs of vitality and experience renewed hope in the Spirit's work. I praise God for these life-giving highlights from 2017:

- Eleven ordinations (a record number for the recent past)
- At least 230 pastors, deacons, and CYF and other staff members meeting in peer groups for prayer, support, learning, and, often a creative, transformative retreat – all supported with synod funds
- Six hundred 5<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders attending weekly church gatherings in Prior Lake
- A host of gifted millennials serving as leaders in our synod; new start congregations in the millennial-rich areas of Northeast Minneapolis and the North Loop
- Vibrant, multicultural congregations and an area ministry strategy in north Minneapolis
- Fourteen congregations gathering “at the river” to paddle canoes and pray for waters and lakes
- Racial justice liaisons from 48 churches meeting bimonthly to strengthen efforts against racism
- Traveling with 16 young, gifted pastors on a “once-in-a-lifetime” 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Reformation trip to our companion synod in Leipzig
- New energy in our companion synod relationship with Nigeria (I was blessed to travel there twice in 2017, the first time for the installation of Archbishop Musa Filibus, who is also the newly elected president of the Lutheran World Federation and will speak at our Synod Assembly this May.)
- Congregations supporting a host of unique global partnerships from South Sudan to India to El Salvador to Haiti to Liberia
- Creating the Resurrection Fund for faithful stewardship of resources given to the synod by congregations after the sale of church property (We are inspired to imagine the good fruit this Resurrection Fund will bear.)
- Accompanying 36 congregations in call processes; presiding at 37 installations (In particular, I love my visits to congregations right before they begin interviewing for a new pastor.)
- A balanced synod budget, clean audit, and strong mission support to ELCA churchwide
- Well-attended and engaging Tool Kit events for more than 100 elected church council members; the chance to meet the faithful and tireless lay leaders who serve our congregations and communities
- The remarkable leadership and ministry of our synod staff, synod council, deans, and other synod leaders

Even more than these highlighted activities, we praise God for the daily and weekly work all around our synod: transforming lives through the gift of a new beginning in Jesus Christ, forming authentic communities where confidence and doubt, joy, and sorrow are welcomed and shared; being truly present in the neighborhoods around us; striving for justice and healing in our world.

The coming months are significant for the Minneapolis Area Synod. Conference Assemblies are Sunday, February 25, and the Synod Assembly is May 4-5. Both include steps in the bishop election process. As I complete my sixth year as your bishop, I want to say how grateful I am for the privilege of serving in this calling. I have indicated my openness to election to a second term. More importantly, I join with you in asking the Holy Spirit to guide us in the coming process. Please hold our synod in your prayers.

I give thanks for our vital partnership and look forward to deepening our shared mission. Please let us know how we can serve one another better – working together so all experience **gracious invitation** into **life-giving Christian community** and live in **just and healthy neighborhoods**.

In Christ,

Bishop Ann Svennungsen