



Welcome to the 2018 Minneapolis Area Synod Assembly!

As faithful followers have done every year since Jesus' Resurrection, we Lutherans gather together for two days to conduct business ... Okay, that's not exactly true.

But it is indeed true that the church has gathered regularly over the past two millennia – to seek the encouragement and guidance of the Holy Spirit. This year's theme, "I Will Pour Out My Spirit," reflects our trust in God's promise to be present with us as we gather in 2018 – filling us with courage to live as Christ's body in the world.

Oh, we often compare ourselves to the early church described by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles. And, often, we come up short. When we do, we should indeed confess and repent.

And yet, I want to say that, as the Bishop of the Minneapolis Area Synod, I so often witness the incredible acts of faithfulness of our congregations and their members.

- Congregational leaders in Chanhassen, Chaska, Eden Prairie, New Prague, Shakopee, and Waconia praying for the Spirit's leading as they make plans for a potential new Latino ministry.
- Bethany on Franklin Avenue serving its 50,000<sup>th</sup> bowl of soup to its Seward neighborhood and gathering with Muslim neighbors for fellowship.
- Young people preparing to be pastors and deacons because they were prodded and encouraged to start seminary by their congregation, a Bible camp experience, or the prompting of a campus pastor.
- The launching of the synod's Resurrection Fund to start new ministries, award ministry imagination grants to congregations, launch a major synod initiative, and tithe to an ELCA or global ministry.
- Congregations supporting unique global partnerships from Nigeria to India, from Haiti and El Salvador to South Sudan.

I realize that spending time away from your other responsibilities this weekend is no small thing. And yet, I hope you also know that your presence here is a **big** thing! Spending time together makes us all better able to join God's movement in the world. I expect that you will bring back to your congregation new insights, new relationships, renewed faith, and a deeper commitment to our common mission.

We'll worship, sing, play, listen to some of the most inspiring leaders in the ELCA and the Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria, learn from one another, and do the business of being synod.

And, even as we move toward Pentecost, we will know that God's spirit has been poured out upon us anew as we've gathered in this place. I thank God for you and for the mission we share.

In Christ,

Bishop Ann Svennungsen