

Vice President's Report

June 2019-June 2020

Nancy Nagel

I followed Dennis Allerheiligen in this office and I thank him for his support, encouragement and help in the transition. Members of the Synod Council are: Scott Schulte (Treasurer), Rev. Chad Langdon, (Secretary), Rev. David Strommen, Chelsea Deines, Susan Boxberger, Theo Keesee, Rev. Kristen Koch, Dan Lilienkamp, Linda Lockhart, Rev. Lorna Paulus, Terrence Freeman, Dallas Rakestraw, Joanie Saltzman, and Mindy Tillberg. We thank Rev. Kristen Koch for her council service as she completes her term.

I was elected at the Synod Assembly in June 2019 at the same time as Bishop Susan Candea. Our terms began September 1, 2019. She hit the ground running planning for the transition from Bishop Roger Gustafson. I presided over my first synod council meeting on October 10, 2019 also the first time I ever attended a synod council meeting. Bishop Candea was installed by Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton on October 19, 2019. Synod Officers took part in that service.

The Executive Committee met January 10, 2020 at the Synod office to recommend a budget to the full council and to engage in an evaluation with Bishop Susan Candea. The evaluation covered the period of September 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019. The discussion was beneficial for executive committee members as well as the Bishop. Results of the conversation will inform goals and objectives for the Bishop going forward.

If this report was being delivered at the real-life Synod Assembly in St Louis, we would spend considerable time celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Ordination of women. It has been my honor to work in full partnership with several ordained pastors in the ELCA including the following women: Pastor Janice Kibler, former Bishop's Associate of the Central States Synod, Pastor Robin Morgan, Interim Pastor of Peace Lutheran in Washington Missouri, Pastor Aimee Appell, pastor of Peace Lutheran, and our current Bishop Susan Candea. They have each used their particular gifts and skills at just the right time as God called them and continues to call them.

Leadership is so important in a time of crisis and our synod has risen to the occasion over the last three months since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Council members have given their time for discernment, conversation and planning even as they are tending to their own congregations, jobs and families. Our Synod staff members have worked long hours from their homes and have consistently delivered clear guidance, open communication, transparent decision-making and calm reassurance of God's never-failing presence.

The synod council met March 28, 2020 to assess the response to the pandemic and to look ahead. The council reviewed the current year spending plan and upcoming year's budget to make sure they are in line with anticipated giving. At this meeting the Council made the decision to postpone the Synod Assembly for 2020.

As the full council held conversations about plans, budgets and synod staff activities, it became apparent we needed to determine some commonly held criteria for our decision-making. I asked the Bishop and staff to lead the council in developing core values for the synod staff and council. Council members and synod staff spent a very productive Saturday morning May 16 in prayer, Scripture and conversation around questions of what do we value most, what do we miss most, what do we have a passion for. Over and over again, the concept of community was raised – It's what we miss, it's what we value, it's what we are trying to re-create. We are expanding it with technology, and re-defining it, God is present in community.

Some challenges identified by council members during these conversations are how to be a life-giving church when the world is full of death and dying. We are pondering what “returning to normal” means. We will engage in deep listening to God and each other to determine how to best be the body of Christ in the Central States Synod in the coming months and beyond. The synod council will continue to discern the core values that will guide us as we explore and more fully define community as well as several additional concepts. These values will be shared synod-wide as they are finalized.

It is hard to envision a future beyond the next few months and one without the Covid-19 pandemic and its devastating effects. The synod council will continue to carry out the work of the Central States Synod as we live with this worldwide disease outbreak. As of this writing, synod leaders are planning how we will carry out our work over the next few months, what events should be postponed, held by Zoom, or maybe not even held. Coronavirus may determine the shape of our future activities but it will not stop us from preaching, teaching, and bringing wholeness to a broken world.

I invite you to join me in the following Prayer of Good Courage from Holden Village as we move ahead in the year 2020.

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Respectfully Submitted
Nancy Nagel, Vice President
Central States Synod
