

Report of Directors for Evangelical Mission
Pastor Donna Simon and Pastor Kendra Nolde

In September, 2019, Kendra Nolde joined Donna Simon as the 2nd half-time DEM for the Central States Synod. Kendra is based in St. Louis and relates with the Eastern Missouri and Osage Conferences. Donna resides in Kansas City and relates with the Border, Central, and Western Kansas Conferences. Donna also serves the congregation of St. Mark Hope and Peace in Kansas City.

Congregational Vitality Initiative

In 2018, we launched an initiative to encourage vitality in the ministries of our synod. At this point, hundreds of leaders from across the synod have participated in the first four of six Congregational Vitality Workshops. Approximately twenty congregations have taken the Congregational Vitality Survey and reviewed the results with one of the DEMs.

In addition to those primary tools of the vitality initiative, synod pastoral leaders can sign up for coaching with one of our trained coaches; we have coaches trained to help leaders make progress in any area they would like to explore; in addition, we have a number of coaches with additional training in special fields: stewardship, discipleship, mission development, and care of creation. The synod offers a matching grant to cover the costs of coaching.

The Central States Synod Congregational Vitality work is overseen by a team of dedicated leaders who form our **Congregational Vitality Table**. We are deeply grateful for the commitment and wisdom of these members: Jane Brda, Hans Koschmann, Nancy Mitchell, and Tom Wehrman.

“Scrappy Congregations” Initiative

In September, 2019, Rev. Dr. David Daubert led a two day workshop for our synod called Vital Leaders for Vital Congregations. Forty-five leaders from our congregations with fifty or fewer attendees at worship gathered to spend time uncovering three actions of vital congregations:

Be Who You Are (Identity)

See What You Have (Assets)

Do What Matters (Action)

When that training ended, we put together cohorts of congregations which have continued to meet. We organized ourselves under the moniker “Scrappy Congregations,” and we chat on a Facebook page called “Scrappy Congregations of the Central States Synod.” Great conversation happens there, and you are invited to join in, no matter what sized church you’re from.

“Anchor Church” Initiative

In the past year, we have waded into the ministry of connecting congregations in a relationship that the folks in the churchwide office have called “anchor churches.” These relationships vary according to the needs of the congregations, but as a general rule, they involve a congregation that is healthy and has vitality to spare connecting with a congregation that is looking to grow spiritually, missionally, and in other ways.

We have one developing anchor church relationship and would like to start more. If you are interested in partnering with another congregation to learn and grow together, please let Donna or Kendra know.

Mission Development

Together, we provide oversight and support for the nine Synod Authorized Worshiping Communities (SAWC) in the Central States Synod:

Sagrado Corazon (Garden City, KS)
El Divino Nino (Dodge City, KS)
The Bridge (New Town, St. Charles, MO)
South Sudanese Worshiping Community (St. Joseph, MO)
Oromo Christian Community (Kansas City, MO)
Gathering Table (Kansas City, MO)
Mision San Juan/Partners (Wichita, KS)
Holy Cross South Campus (Overland Park, KS)
Lutheran Church of Hope Local Site (Shawnee, KS)

Needless to say, these days of COVID-19 pandemic have been challenging for most of our mission developments. Many are more vulnerable in terms of financial sustainability and the physical health of their members and the communities they serve. Along with the Synod Mission Table, we have advocated for additional resources and promotion of these ministries.

We are grateful to the **Synod Mission Table** for their assistance in this work. The Mission Table provides oversight by reviewing churchwide and synodical grant requests and receiving reports from mission congregations and developers. They also help to identify new areas for mission around the synod. In these days of COVID-19, the Mission Table is raising questions about how this moment is making possible new ways of reaching out with the gospel through on-line, digital means. Current members of the Mission Table include: Jacob Spilker, Jill Seagle, Roy Christell, Scott Musselman, and Alix Pridgen.

Area Ministry Strategies

The Eastern Missouri Conference Strategy has shifted in recent months. Partially formed to support transitional ministries in the Conference during a period of high rostered leader turnover, that need has now stabilized. Three times a year, the Eastern Missouri Conference Strategy Team hosts an “academy” with workshops to support congregational life, as well as a focus on dismantling racism. Jane Brda serves as a Conference Communicator.

Our Wichita Area Ministry Strategy has focused on several ministry areas in and around Wichita, KS. The Youth and Young Adult Ministry Team is working to establish a campus presence at Wichita State University and to grow collaborative youth ministry opportunities. The Outreach/Social Ministry Team is connecting congregations in service to their neighbors. One of the blessings to grow from their work is a drop-in clinic for persons experiencing homelessness and poverty. The Worship and Welcome Team is focused on, well, worship and welcome, including participation in a Building an Inclusive Church training held at Reformation Lutheran.

Looking Ahead

The area of stewardship will now fall in the DEM portfolio; feel free to contact either one of us for assistance and resources.

We continue to look for ways to support innovation in congregational ministries. In the midst of all the grief and losses of this time of pandemic, we are also called to ask: what does this moment make

possible? We stand ready to help congregations embrace the new possibilities of worship in a digital age, new forms of spiritual and social connection, and service to neighbors whose lives have been disrupted and even fractured.