

Vice President's Report

"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."

This prayer, written by Eric Milner-White while at Holden Village, is one that I often return to as your Vice President of the East Central Synod of Wisconsin. The work of the synod is shared by all of us, synod staff, rostered folks and, yes, lay members. We all play a critical role in this expression of the church.

Imran Siddiqui, the ELCA Churchwide Vice President, shared a comment that he often hears, as have many of us as Synod VPs, "You ought to go to seminary and become a minister." His answer, like most of the rest of us, is an animated "No! Lay members define the ELCA." It takes all of us. I want to stress this because I know how much is placed at the feet of our rostered leaders. The work of being church together means exactly that, it takes all of us, each of us working together using our unique gifts.

As a synod, we are going out to be servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending. The final sale of the office building has opened us up to more opportunities for ministry. The work of the Synod Mission Table has identified needs for ministries of varying sorts, some which would never have been even considered years ago.

Once again this year we have an active and engaged Synod Council. We all share in the work of the synod. We had a hybrid style of meetings, starting with a great retreat on the sacred ground of Pine Lake Camp. We met online in September, November, January and March and were able to meet in person in April at the Lutheran Church of the Wilderness and then, of course, at Synod Assembly in May.

Our council tackled many complicated issues with knowledge and grace. A special thanks to Adam Clifford as he completes his first term on Council. Council members also worked hard to represent the Synod at congregational events throughout the year, attending installations, anniversaries and other celebrations, as well as being present for important congregational meetings such as witnessing votes when calling a new pastor or being with members during a congregation's Holy Closure. We also joined other lay members throughout the synod in important committee and task force work.

This March I had the opportunity to attend the Vice President meeting at the Churchwide office in Chicago. It was great to spend time learning, networking and worshiping with other vice presidents from across the country. I left inspired by the knowledge and dedication of these incredible lay leaders. In addition to learning from other vice presidents, we also were given updates from Churchwide staff on a variety of topics, including the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, Bishop elections, conflict management, mission support, Churchwide structure and the ELCA Social Statement process, including the Human Sexuality Social Statement reconsiderations and the draft of the Civic Life and Faith Social Statement.

A busy year...continually being reminded that following Jesus is not the way of the world, which brings me back to the prayer at the beginning of my report.

Go out with good courage.

Nancy Schanke
East Central Synod of Wisconsin Vice President