

Report of Conferences

Central Conference

The collegiality continues to be tremendous among the leaders in the central conference. We have a well-attended gathering each month, centered around worship, with an opportunity to share. There are occasional presenters as well. Each August our meeting is intentionally structured as a day of rest.

Likewise, we have a well-attended weekly text study each Tuesday at Immanuel in Dixon. While it is mostly Lutheran preachers using the Revised Common Lectionary, we do have colleagues from other traditions and will engage other texts as requested (such as from the Narrative Lectionary).

The central conference welcomed many great ministers of word & sacrament this past year. Rev. Karyn Kost was called to Freedom (Oregon) and St. James (Forreston). Rev. David Schweppe was called to Immanuel (Dixon). Rev. Kristine Dohrmann is serving as interim at Bethesda (Morrison).

Wartburg Seminary student Ryan Mackey is currently a Collaborative Learning student and serving part-time at Trinity Lutheran Church in Manlius, IL.

Three of our members are serving on the Northern Illinois Synod Council: Rev. Janet Wold, All Saints (Byron); Ms. Minnette Scott of Freedom Lutheran (Oregon); and Mr. Ryan Mackey of Trinity (Manlius).

Thank you to our Synod, our Bishop, our colleagues, and our God for the tremendous amount of support we receive as leaders and congregations here in the conference.

The Rev. Jessica Bakken, Central Conference Dean

East Conference

The congregations of the East Conference partner together in ministry. Our congregations are in a variety of settings: city, urban, suburban, small-town, and rural, and East Conference rostered ministers and deacons serve in a variety of roles and congregations.

Our monthly gatherings include worship, fellowship, collegial support, and professional development. We meet on the 4th Thursdays of the month and we move our meetings around the East Conference congregations.

We commit to praying for each other, supporting each other, celebrating our shared mission, and nurturing the connections between leaders and congregations for the sake of God's mission, for the sake of the Synod's and ELCA's vitality, and for the sake of making church ministry that much more enjoyable.

We give thanks for our shared partnership and the support we receive from each other and from the Northern Illinois Synod staff and Bishop Clements.

The Rev. Benjamin Ingelson, East Conference Dean

North Conference

The members of the North Conference—comprised of Word and Sacrament, Word and Service, seminary interns, and lay leaders—meet monthly, for fellowship, and collegiality.

October: We engaged in conversations around our companion synod relationships with Pastor Theophilus of the Arcot Lutheran Church in India and Pastor Gary Erickson who visited the North Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT) in Africa.

November/December: We met for a Christmas celebration including worship and lunch and were given the special blessing of being joined by the bishop.

January: We were visited by Joy Medrano of LSSI who brought information and encouragement to participate in Lutheran Day 2019 in Springfield.

February: The Rev. Gary Erickson, Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission brought information about the Congregational Vitality project and invitations for the congregations in the North Conference to participate.

March: This meeting was held at the synod office which allowed bishop Clements to attend, in addition to conversation around a variety of topics, Joyce Palmer from LSSI brought information regarding foster care programs and the overwhelming need for foster families.

April: Annual meeting at Bethlehem.

May: In addition to our regular meeting, we had a “book swap,” which enabled many to reduce the size of their libraries!

The conference continues to work closely with Rockford Lutheran Schools and Rockford Area Lutheran Ministries, which includes Becca’s Closet, Laundry Love and Park Players. We continue to be blessed by this partnership.

The North Conference has been a place of *change!* We welcomed two seminary interns: Alfi Wyatt (Zion, Rockford) and Katrina Steingraeber (Christ, Belvidere), and we said goodbye to Pastors Rob James, who accepted a call to churchwide, TroyAnn Pouloupoulos who has returned Memphis, and Jeff Fricke, who has accepted a call in Green Bay. Pastor Scott Stolberg transitioned from a call at Zion, Belvidere to Our Savior’s, Rockford. Open calls are currently being filled by Interim Pastors Robert Franek (Emmanuel, Rockford), Len Hoffman (Our Saviors, Rockford), Woody Knutson, (Zion, Belvidere) and Wendy Popp (Bethlehem, Rockford). And finally, with sadness and grateful hearts we said goodbye to Tabor Lutheran. For 93 years that congregation of faithful people ministered to the community in Jesus’ name. Thanks be to God!

Thank you to Bishop’s assistants Rev. Denver Bitner and Dcn. Cheryl Erdmann for walking with us.

The North Conference is an active, positive, and collegial place to share in ministry in Jesus’ name. We are blessed to gather and strengthen one another for service to the Lord.

Servants Together,
The Rev. Julane Nease, North Conference Dean

Northeast Conference

The rostered ministers of the Northeast Conference, from campus ministry and congregations in DeKalb and McHenry counties, gather for fellowship, worship, and conversation on the third Tuesday of the month.

During the past year we have shared in conversation and welcomed guest presenters to our meetings around the following topics: youth ministry, guest/visitor follow-up practices, Micah Groups, the Milwaukee Urban Retreat Center, and recycling for congregations. Our May 2019 spring assembly topic will be on the Opioid Crisis in our country.

We are glad to welcome leaders and celebrate new calls in our conference: Pastor Preston Fields to Salem Lutheran, Sycamore. We pray for those serving in interim ministries: Pastor Bob Hansen at Grace Place at NIU; Pastor Rob Kinnear at Redeemer, Woodstock.

Thanks be to God for the gift of colleagues and communities of faith as we are called forward together in Christ.

Respectfully Submitted,
The Rev. Sarah Wilson, Northeast Conference Dean

Northwest Conference

This past year, the Northwest Conference was pleased to welcome a couple new faces into our midst.

- Interim Pastor Carole Andres, Trinity, Lanark
- SAM Sharon Beksel, Trinity, Durand
- Vicar Michelle Knight, St. Paul, Warren
- Interim Pastor Carol Soderholm, Trinity/Milledgeville and First/Jordan
- Interim Pastor Art Stees, Prince of Peace, Freeport
- Interim Pastor Christine Stienstra, First, Chadwick
- The Rev. Karen Tews, Prince of Peace, Freeport

During this year, we have also had to say goodbye to the following:

- The Rev. Jenna Couch, Lord of Love, Galena
- The Rev. Pat Esker, Trinity, Durand
- The Rev. Jaime Gallagher, Trinity/Milledgeville and First/Jordan
- Interim Pastor Katie Gallagher, Prince of Peace, Freeport
- The Rev. Mark Oehlert, Shepherd of the Hills, Scales Mound
- The Rev. Wendy Popp, Trinity, Lanark
- The Rev. Chris Schoon, First, Chadwick
- Interim Pastor Art Stees, Prince of Peace, Freeport

This past year has been a spiritually-enriching journey as we have walked together under the leadership of Bishop Jeffrey Clements. We most certainly experienced the blessing of his leadership, love, and friendship. Again, our conference's presence has been felt synod-wide in many ways, including through our own Pastor Pat Esker's continued expertise as our synod's Parliamentarian. Though Pastor Pat has moved into a position in the Office of the Bishop, we look forward to continuing to work with her in new and vibrant ways!

As we embark on a new year proclaiming Christ here and to the ends of the earth, we give great thanksgiving for our Lord's enduring presence in many and various awesome and astounding ways!

In Christ,

The Rev. Tom Ekstrand, Northwest Conference Dean

South Conference

The South Conference stretches from Streator to Mendota and Seneca to Ohio. This year, we said good-bye to Pr. Tim Kenyon as he retired to Rockford. Pr. William Weidenbach is serving as interim at St. John's, Peru. We also said good-bye to Pr. Kim Lee-Brown as she took a call outside the Synod. Pr. Chris Schoon returned to the South Conference to serve as interim at St. John's, Somonauk. The pastors met monthly during the school year for fellowship and worship. Our Conference assembly was a potluck held at St. Matthew's, Princeton. Pr. Gary Erickson was our speaker and informed us about the Congregation Vitality Process.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Rev. Kris Ann Zierke, South Conference Dean

Southwest Conference

The rostered leaders of the Southwest Conference, along with synodically authorized lay ministers, gather monthly for mutual support, excellent conversation, updates, and communion. We have enjoyed connecting with each other and with the larger Church. Although winter weather made us cancel one meeting and almost cancel two others, we continued to support each other via email.

This past year has been a wonderful time of welcoming. With many transitions occurring in 2018, we had many opportunities to welcome new rostered leaders to the conference. Two pastors have begun new

calls this past year: Pastor Jamie Gallagher at First Lutheran, Monmouth; and Pastor Mara Ahles-Iverson at Zion Lutheran, Kewanee. We also welcomed the following pastors now serving interim positions: Pastor Randall Swanson at Messiah, Galva; Pastor Michael Lawyer at Grace Lutheran, Knoxville; Pastor David Vidler at Bethel Lutheran, Stronghurst and Raritan Reformed, Raritan; and Pastor Katie Gallagher at Faith Lutheran, Wataga.

We also had a few clergy transition outside our conference. We wished farewell to Pastors Cliff Schmidt and Jeff Linman as they completed interims and to Pastor Robert Franek as he moved to Rockford. With Pastor Robert's departure, the conference dean and treasurer positions became available. I was elected to serve as dean, and later Pastor Jamie Gallagher was elected treasurer.

The congregations and leaders of the Southwest Conference look forward to another year of faithful ministry in our corner of the synod.

Respectfully submitted,
The Rev. Julie Monnard, Southwest Conference Dean

West Conference

The West Conference Rostered Leaders met regularly for worship, mutual support and ministry over the past year. We prayed together, shared ideas together, and sought to support each other in ministry.

This past year the dean of the West Conference, Pr. Mike Lawyer, stepped down so that he might serve at an interim pastor position in the Southwest Conference. Pastor Reed Lee Pedersen took over this position.

In 2018, Pr. Larry Conway finished his call at Trinity Lutheran Church, Moline. Pr. Conway now serves as a chaplain at Friendship Manor in Moline. The good people of Trinity called Pr. Peter Bredlau to lead them.

In this conference, we continue to hear, witness, speak, and act the Good News of Jesus Christ with the community.

In humble service,
The Rev. Reed Lee Pedersen, West Conference Dean