



Northern Illinois Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission

The peace of our Lord be with you all. My name is Josh Ebener and I just began my call to serve as the Director of Evangelical Mission & Assistant to the Bishop at the beginning of this year. I grew up in the Quad Cities (Davenport) and have lived in Mexico and Argentina. I graduated with a Master of Divinity at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago in 2009 and served my first call at Trinity Lutheran Church in Long Beach, CA. Before taking this call I served for 9 years as pastor of St. Andrew/San Andrés Lutheran Church, a bilingual, multicultural congregation in West Chicago, IL. I also served for 3 years part time as the coordinator of Latinx Strategy in the Metro Chicago Synod.

During these past few months I have been mostly focused on meeting people and getting to know the synod, its conferences, congregations and leaders. In March I participated in the ELCA Mission Developers/New DEMs training and the Assistant to Bishops gathering.

At the same time I am hitting the ground running with synod work. I am relating to two conferences, North & Northeast; and two committees, Outreach & Social Ministry, and the Racial Justice and World Hunger subcommittees. I am also working with some of our congregations in transition, assisting them through the call process.

As DEM, a big part of my role is around congregational vitality, which involves having conversations with congregations about what gives them life, energy, meaning and purpose; and discerning where God is calling them. One tool we are using with congregations as a launching point into these conversations is the congregational vitality survey: Home (congregationalvitalitysurvey.com)

My role as DEM also involves potential explorations for new ministries, as well as working with our current mission starts, or SAWCs (Synod-Authorized Worshipping Communities). Currently in NIS we have one SAWC, San Jose Obrero, a predominantly Spanish language worshipping community that started in 2011 and is currently housed at Trinity, Moline. We are now planning a coordinated strategy with the Southeastern Iowa Synod, which will involve a re-start for San Jose Obrero with a new shared mission developer. We have another congregation that is interested in a Latinx ministry exploration as well.

I am grateful for this opportunity and I am excited to be joining the synod staff and to meet and work with all of you.

Blessings,

Rev. Josh Ebener
Director for Evangelical Mission