

Thank you for taking the time to learn about the ministry of Region 5 as you prepare for and engage in the business of your synod assembly. This synod joins with eleven other synods in Wisconsin, Upper Michigan, Iowa, and Illinois to form Region 5: one of the 9 regions across the ELCA. The ministry of region 5 is roughly divided into 3 categories: convening synod ministry leaders; accompaniment of those preparing to become pastors and deacons; and tending to archival records.

As a region, your synod bishop, staff, and other leaders gather with their colleagues throughout the year. These gatherings are a way for them to support and pray with one another; and to share their ideas, experience and expertise with one another to faithfully minister in your synod. The twelve bishops, along with the regional candidacy manager, make up a regional steering committee. Their collegiality is important in establishing great working partnerships for years to come.

In 2022, Region 5 hosted 2 in-person gatherings along with regular video conferencing throughout the year. In the spring, candidacy staff and chairpersons met under the theme “welcome accompaniment.” We spent time sharing and learning strategies to improve our welcome and inclusion of all potential candidates regardless of various identity markers. In the fall, 50 synod leaders (Bishops and staff) gathered for worship, learning and ministry collaboration. Our speaker, Dr. Miquel de la Torre provided insights for thought provoking discussion.

The Region 5 steering committee continued a collaborative grants program established in 2020. Funds are awarded for collaborations involving two or more synods in Region 5. Grants are intended to support innovative leadership and mission projects within the region. In 2022, 3 grants were awarded: a new regional youth gathering “ReBound”; shared advocacy education with Wisconsin Council of Churches, and diversity, equity and inclusion education.

As candidacy and leadership manager for region 5, much of my work is spent working with synod candidacy committees. “Candidacy” is the term used to describe our process of forming and preparing people to serve as a pastor or deacon in the ELCA. Ministry also includes training for new candidacy staff and committees. In September 2023 candidacy committee members will have the opportunity to participate in a national online candidacy summit.

You have a part in raising up, nurturing, and sending those whom God calls into service as pastor and deacon. To that end, I commend to you a resource, “Called to Lead”, available online at www.elca.org/resources/candidacy. This discernment guide is for those who are wondering about ministry as a pastor or deacon. As a leader in your congregation, it is also a resource for you as a helpful conversation tool when talking with people you know who have gifts for ministry in the ELCA. As members of the ELCA we believe that discernment about vocation is holy work for all people. God calls all of us to live out our vocation in community, in service to God and in love toward the neighbor. A new online tool www.journi.faith is for all who are interested in exploring how their gifts for ministry can be put into service throughout the ecology of the ELCA and beyond.

As a region, we also share in the care of archival records. Region 5 archives are housed at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa. Our archivist, Sue Dodd, collects records of and responds to inquiries concerning synods, deceased rostered personnel, and dissolved congregations within region 5. This work both preserves institutional records and documents the historical record of the institution within the context of the larger world. In 2022 Region 5 purchased a commercial scanner to begin undertaking the task of digitizing records currently held in the Region 5 collection. This will both assist us with space concerns as well as preserve documents in our collection at risk of deterioration. As congregations make decisions to close, Sue is a resource to you in determining what records to save and how to transfer them to the archives.

Thank you for your synod’s participation in this shared ministry and for the privilege to serve among you.

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