



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. Region 5 welcomed a record number of new bishops to the steering committee in 2020 with three bishop elections and two interim bishop appointments. In 2021 we will welcome two new bishops. Their collegiality is important in establishing great working partnerships for years to come.

As with all ministry settings, Region 5 ministries shifted greatly last year due to the global pandemic. The steering committee suspended all in person regional gatherings in March 2020, and bishops established a weekly videoconference schedule. The steering committee also established a “jubilee” for synod contributions to Region 5 following the first quarter of 2020 and significantly reduced the recommended synod contributions to Region 5 for 2021 and 2022.

The steering committee continued a collaborative grants program established in 2020. Funds are awarded for innovative collaborations involving two or more synods in Region 5. For 2021, Region 5 is supporting projects aimed diversity and inclusion. 1) Diversity and Inclusion series of events for adults. 2) Multi-Cultural Youth Leadership Academy. Both projects will involve all three synods in Illinois and Northern Great Lakes Synod in Wisconsin/U.P. of Michigan.

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, shepherding a new First Call Process approved in 2020 and begun on 2/1/2021, and continuing to foster partnerships in varied spaces across the church.

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 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. As congregations in the region make decisions to close, Sue is a resource to you in determining what records to save and how to transfer them to the archives. Although the archives are closed to the public due to the pandemic, the work continues, and you are commended to reach out to Sue via email.

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

Rev. Ramie L. Bakken, Candidacy and Leadership Manager ramie.bakken@elca.org
Sue Dodd, Region 5 Archivist sdodd@wartburgseminary.edu