



Northern Illinois Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Congregational Life Committee

2023 Assembly Report

What a year for the Northern Illinois Synod and the Congregational Life Committee of the Synod.

The Congregational Life Committee is one of the five standing committees of our synod.

Its mission and purpose are to support and equip congregations to carry out their ministries at the local level. Much of the committee's work is carried out through four vital subcommittees: Safe Church, Stewardship, Worship, and Youth. Each year, the committee plans and implements the annual Congregational Resourcing Event (CRE), helps support the synod's stewardship efforts, and offers grants to be used as seed money for local congregational projects.

It's hard to believe that a year ago at this time, we were gearing up to elect a new Bishop and still wearing masks in several areas of this Synod after a long two years (and counting) of COVID. As you well know, a new Bishop, Rev. Stacie Fidler was elected at our 2022 Synod Assembly, and with that began a staff transition that would include a new Synod staff liaison for the Congregational Life Committee for the first time in several years. We wished Deacon Cheryl Erdmann a fond farewell. Our Committee welcomed our new staff liaison Rev. Julie Monnard, Assistant to Bishop Fidler, and we hit the ground running.

We as a committee were ready to have the first in person Congregational Resourcing Event (CRE) since 2019. As you may remember, 2020 was cancelled; 2021 and 2022 were held online. We realized we needed to find a venue as for the first time in several years as Kishwaukee College was not available. For the 2023 CRE, Sauk Valley Community College in Dixon was chosen as the venue. A keynote speaker and breakout sessions were planned around the theme "Be the Body" We welcomed Rev. Dr. Charlene Rachuy Cox, as our speaker and leader as we dove deep into the spiritual practice of vocare. The keynote was given by our very own Bishop Fidler. Participants were broken out in breakout groups to have conversations that allowed us to think about who we are as the body of Christ as individuals and as the church. Breakout groups were further broken out at Rostered Ministers and Lay. The afternoon sessions included workshops from all our Synod staff which related to their areas of leadership and various ministries of our synod. Close to 250 people from all over the Synod attended, which was great for the first in person CRE since 2019. Overall, the CRE went very well and we as the committee received great feedback. I thank all who attended the 2023 CRE and especially thank the Synod Staff who took on much of the work to put on this CRE.

We as a committee also gave out two grants for Fiscal Year 2023. One to the Diakonia group for advertising. One to Trinity, Mt. Morris for a new, monthly "Trinity Nights" dinners and activities.

A few of the projects and work of the committee for this next year will include planning CRE 2024, receiving grant applications for the 2024 Fiscal Year, and reviewing and restarting our subcommittees back up.

Also, this past year we bid farewell to our chairperson of almost 3 years Mr. Mike Parmele who had to resign in January due to personal reasons. We also bid farewell to our other Co-Chair Ms. Deb Kunakey who also had to resign for personal reasons.

I would be mistaken if I didn't recognize the members of our great committee:

- Pr. Chris Lee (First, Rock Island), Mr. Brandon Graves (Salem, Sycamore), and Ms. Georgiana Grossman (Immanuel, Amboy) all of who's terms expire in 2023 and will be coming off the committee.
- Ms. Carol Johnson (Prince of Peace, Freeport) and Mr. Kent Kindelsperger (Swedona, Lynn Center) whose terms expire in 2024.
- Ms. Melissa Rojas (Trinity, Mt. Morris), Deacon Laura Gorton (Christ, Belvidere), Pr. David Efflandt (Peace, Port Byron), and Pr. Chrissy Salser (Christ, Stockton) whose terms expire in 2025.
- I'd also like to thank our Synod Staff Liaison Pr. Julie Monnard.

In closing, I'd like to thank the members of all Northern Illinois Synod Congregations who support us through your mission support so our committee can continue doing the great work of our Synod and so we can continue "Walking Together, Loving Christ – Loving all, for the sake of the world". It's been a pleasure to serve on behalf of the entire Synod.

In Christ,
Mr. Brandon Graves (Salem, Sycamore)
Congregational Life Committee Chairperson