



Northern Illinois Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission

I want to begin by thanking you all for your partnership. It has been a blessing to work with you all as partners in ministry in the Northern Illinois Synod. It has been a year and a half since I began this role as A2B (Assistant to the Bishop) & DEM (Director for Evangelical Mission). In that time I have been focused on visiting congregations, listening to and walking with people through the joys and struggles of life and ministry.

I have worked with nearly 20 of our congregations using the congregational vitality survey to get a pulse on the vitality and energy in the congregation, have conversations around mission and do some dreaming and visioning for the future. It has been a joy to walk with congregations all across our synod as they have these important conversations. I am also doing work around shared ministry, which has included asset mapping with two of our conferences (North and West) to explore potential collaborations.

Another tool we have been using in this vitality work with congregations is MapDash for Faith Communities with FaithX. MapDash is an interactive online, map-based platform for demographics, trends, and analytics, including congregational vitality and sustainability, missional opportunity, and drive-time analysis. This tool allows us to generate a 2-page Neighborhood Insights Report with over 40 key demographic factors in a designated radius (5, 10, or 15 minute drive time) around a church. This tool is available to all of our NIS congregations and is assisting in understanding and walking with our communities.

My role as DEM also involves working with our mission start congregations, or SAWCs (Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities):

- San Jose Obrero (SJO), a predominantly Spanish language worshipping community that started in 2011 and is currently housed at Trinity, Moline. Rev. Jose Pilar Alvarez Cabrera began serving there in July of last year. This was a part of a new coordinated strategy with the Southeastern Iowa Synod for Lutheran Latino ministry in the Quad Cities. During the last year there have been new families participating in the church, and an average of 30 people attending Sunday services. SJO also celebrates baptisms, quinceañeras, and have 9 children in the first communion/confirmation class. They celebrated the Day of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 10 with dances by Danza Azteca, and over 100 people in attendance.
- Becoming, our newest mission start in Oswego, is exploring new ways of being the church, particularly among people who haven't always been included in the church. The vision is to be "a community who knows they are loved & liberated, who knows their authentic voice & vocation, and who believe they are equipped & empowered to serve their neighbor." Becoming's mission developer, Rev. Pat Fish, started in November of last year, and has been doing 1-on-1 meetings in and around Oswego. They have assembled a diverse launch team (12 leaders). Their first gatherING on April 7 (Holy Humor Sunday) at the Oswego Community Center had 50 people in attendance.

Please pray for our mission starts and invite our mission developers to preach and share about their ministries.

We are excited about these new things God is doing in our synod!

DEM Portfolio:

1. Congregational Vitality
 - a. Conversations with congregations about what gives them life, energy, meaning and purpose; and discerning where God is calling them
 - b. Congregational Vitality Survey (congregationalvitalitysurvey.com)
2. Mission Starts (SAWCs)
 - a. San Jose Obrero Moline
 - b. Oswego Lutheran Mission
3. Committees
 - a. Outreach
 - b. Social Ministry
 - c. Racial Justice
 - d. World Hunger
 - e. Advocacy
4. Boards
 - a. RALM (Rockford Area Lutheran Ministries)
 - b. Grace Place (NIU Campus Ministry)
5. Conferences
 - a. North Conference
 - b. West Conference

Submitted by: Rev. Josh Ebener