



Northern Illinois Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America



## Report of the Northeast Conference

Greetings from the Northeast Conference, made up of congregations in McHenry and DeKalb counties. We have monthly gatherings of rostered ministers, both active and retired. The host of each meeting rotates, which we find to be a nice element to our meetings because we are present in many different ministry settings in our conference.

We average around 15 people per meeting. Since the pandemic, our conference has been looking to overhaul the conference meeting experience in some ways and keep other key elements. The biggest mainstay that we longed for was the fellowship and community of our gatherings. This is why we always have time to intentionally check in with one another, worship together and of course, have some snacks to eat during our gatherings, and some continue the fellowship by having lunch afterward!

As for the overhaul, we no longer wanted to meet just for the sake of meeting. As you know, ministry in 2023-2024 is complex and exciting, but also demands a lot of church leaders. Time is precious! Therefore, we wanted our gatherings to bring something purposeful in addition to our time of fellowship. Together we decide what topics are most pertinent to our collective ministries and find ways to engage them together. One way - we have tried a couple of times and found that we really got a lot out of - is finding an recent article or two about a topic, for instance stewardship in the post-covid era, reading it ahead of our meeting so that we come ready with reactions, questions, and the most exciting aspect, new ideas to brainstorm together about.

Some topics we have tackled in this year include: how to start and/or continue in the Reconciling in Christ discernment process, expanding how we can work together with Lutheran Social Services of Illinois, Mental Health in Ministry, Modern Stewardship, and we will be reading a book in preparation for our meeting in the fall when we will have the author come speak with us, very exciting! We are also hoping to organize a service project for our May "meeting" where we can involve lay persons in coming together to help a big need in our counties. In these topics we usually have had a guest speaker or a point person to organize how to proceed through the chosen topic. We can always do more. I look forward to reading the reports of my fellow deans to see what new ideas they are cooking up as well that we can try in our conference!

Finally, there are a couple of openings in the Northeast Conference. If you are searching for a new call, please give these openings your prayerful consideration. We would love to have you as part of our conference! We look forward to being a supportive community to whomever is called to these congregations. Plus, new people bring new ideas!

A big thank you to our synod Bishop and staff, for all of the work they are doing to lead our synod in this new age of ministry! As a conference dean, I get to see some of the behind the scenes work they are doing, and I can tell God has called some great leaders for our synod. Please keep them in your prayers as they lead us in innovating our Church.

Respectfully submitted,  
Pastor Zach Baer  
Dean, Northeast Conference