



Gospel Seeds...

With Joy and Thanksgiving!

Three young people who call Western North Dakota home have been selected to serve as **Young Adults in Global Mission** this year. YAGM's spend a year serving as missionaries in locations around the world. The three are: Christian Aardahl (Faith Lutheran, Bismarck), Molly Haagenson (Gloria Dei, Williston) and Krista Mathistad (Bethany, Minot).

At Synod Assembly, we will have a brief service of blessing and sending for these three. We will also raise prayers of thanksgiving for two Western North Dakota young adults who have recently completed their YAGM service: Carrie Sandstrom (Good Shepherd, Bismarck) and Solveig Stenslie (Heart River Lutheran, Mandan).

Each person accepted to serve as a YAGM must raise \$5,000 to be a part of the program. The Synod Office is willing to collect funds from any individual or congregation who would like to help support these three-young people. If you send a donation, please indicate it is for the YAGM participants.

Discernment Retreat...

With so many voices vying for our attention, how do we learn to listen to the voice of God? Matt O'Rear, staff person at one of our seminaries, will spend time sorting through some of the predominant voices competing for our attention - voices that stake a claim on who we should be, what we should value, and what makes us happy.

We will spend time thinking about the voice of God which lays claim on our lives and how following that call might help us find a sense of purpose, meaning, and even joy.

This retreat is designed to assist those who are wondering if God may be calling them to leadership as a pastor, deacon or another leadership role within their own congregation or synod. Bishop Mark Narum and staff will also be present for conversations about candidacy and opportunities to serve throughout the church.

The retreat is planned for June 23-24 at Camp of the Cross near Garrison. Visit the synod website to register.

No More Volunteers!

I want to challenge you to remove the word "volunteer" from your church's vocabulary. Instead, I want to encourage a conversation around the way people have been given incredible gifts. Instead of volunteers to prepare and serve meals at church, we should think of them as ministers of hospitality. A meal served following a funeral is a gift, prepared and served by those with special talents. The conversation which flows over that meal is a healing balm for a grieving family.

Those who step up to work with youth are more than volunteers – they are individuals with special gifts of patience, relationship building, the wisdom to listen to a good question and ask more questions in return. This is important ministry which helps young people grow in faith.

While it may sound insignificant to change the language we use, it can be very profound - especially if we take the time to engage people in conversation about their passions and gifts.

Once they have been identified, then further conversation can help identify ways these gifts and passions can be used to love and care for the neighbor. That is ministry at its very best.

A Time For Creativity...

We continue to experience a significant number of pastoral openings across our synod. We are thankful for the congregations who are thinking creatively about new ways to provide Christ-centered Word and Sacrament Ministry in their communities.

-A group of fourteen congregations in the very southwest part of our synod are having a conversation about what a cooperative ministry would look like in their area. About two years ago, conversations among this grouping of congregations lead to the creation of an area-wide Bible study with eighteen participants.

-Another congregation in our synod has two people who will be entering seminary while serving their congregation.

-A congregation on the western edge of the synod is taking the first steps toward a conversation with one of our ecumenical partners about a shared ministry which will benefit both congregations.

What opportunities for creative ministry will be next? Who knows? We are only limited by our imaginations and our willingness to experiment. We continue to pray for the Holy Spirit's nudges.

Rev. Mark Narum

Serving as Bishop of the Western North Dakota Synod

