



Gospel Seeds
A Monthly Update from the Synod

It's All About a Relationships...

The seasons are beginning to shift – soon congregations will move into fall program activities. Church newsletters, bulletins and worship announcements are filled with upcoming activities and opportunities for people to share their talents. I read and hear about calls for Church School teachers, Confirmation Mentors, Bible Study participants and leaders – the list goes on and on – there is no question, we are shifting into a new season of the church year.

So, the question arises, why do we put all of this effort into these activities? Really, what is our end goal for church school or confirmation or for that matter adult Bible Study? What is our expected outcome?

I have been reading a book which has me pondering seemingly simple questions like that and it has helped me realize something – the end goal is a relationship with Jesus, God's only begotten Son. While there is nothing wrong with learning information about God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit – head knowledge does not automatically translate into heart knowledge (in other words into a relationship).

I am more and more convinced that a life giving relationship with Jesus the Risen Christ is what will lead us to wanting more head knowledge. It is the relationship which will draw us into sharing the hope we have found in God's grace with those around us.

So What's the Book...

The book I mentioned above is "Crossing the Bar: Home by Another Way" by James G. Johnson. Deacon Jody Lorenz put me on to this book. It is written by a former ELCA pastor, who now owns and operates a bar.

Each chapter is a theological reflection on life and faith as he engages people who might never set foot in a church. Johnson has some important insights that "church people" can learn from, especially in this changing world.

Take a read – my sense is this could be an excellent Adult Study for any congregation.

Western North Dakota Synod Council – September 14 & 15. If you have items that should be raised let me know.

GIFTS – growing a deeper relationship with Jesus

One of the resources of this synod for growing a Christ centered relationship is GIFTS (Growing In Faith To Serve). Now almost 3 decades old this gathering of people who wants a deeper relationship with Jesus through prayer, scripture study and conversation always has room for more participants.

GIFTS really has components. Probably the best known is the synod-wide component where three or four times a year, seminary professors come here and teach. These are wonderful sessions. The other part of GIFTS is the local gathering – where participants gather with a Mentor Pastor. These local gatherings can engage topics of interest to those gathered. They might include diving deep into a book of the Bible, study around prayer, training on home visitation, digging into Luther's Large Catechism – really the possibilities are endless.

Would you like to learn more – Sherie Heine is available to answer questions and help new local groups get up and running.

"Walking With You" – 2018 Annual Appeal

You probably remember that the word "Synod" is a Greek work which can be translated, "walking together". That is what we do, as 170 congregations with 57,000 members we walk together in our work of proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ.

As a synod staff our job is to "Walk With You" through life's journey. We walk together through call process, congregational mission discernment, candidacy, faith formation activities and much more. To help make this journey together possible a synod annual financial appeal has been established.

The 2018 Annual Appeal will allow us to meet *all* needs of synod ministry, to be quick in meeting immediate opportunities as well as funding new ministries as needed. The cost of the appropriate human resources and staff time required to accompany congregations and individuals on their journey of faith is significantly on the increase.

Soon many of you will be getting a letter inviting you to participate in this appeal, we hope you will respond. If you do not receive a letter it is because we do not have your address but if you would like to give a financial gift we would be honored. You can mail it to: Synod Appeal, 1614 Capitol Way, Bismarck ND 58502

Rev. Mark Narum
 Serving as Bishop of the
 Western North Dakota Synod

