



Gospel Seeds... April 2016

**A Monthly Update from the
Western North Dakota Synod Office**

Gospel Proclaimers Needed...

It has never been a secret that finding people to serve as pastors in rural places is difficult. To be honest, you and I are a part of the problem. We have not done a good job of raising up leaders from our own territory to serve in rural places. Together, with the Holy Spirit's help, we can change this situation. It's time to start talking about the joy of Gospel proclamation. So, it hits me; I get to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ! I need to let others know the joy of that calling... In times of joy and sorrow, in the midst of Spirit-filled renewal gatherings or around council tables in the midst of conflict – I get to proclaim that Jesus has risen! That sin, death, and darkness were defeated by the Cross.

We are “earthen vessels” easily chipped or cracked, yet it is through these vessels that God has chosen to share the Good News. Is the work difficult sometimes? Yes. Is this calling frustrating? Sure. But... it is also a gift. Who else might be called to ministry in Christ's church? Think about it. Pray about it. Let that person know their gifts are needed for Jesus' sake.

A New Path for Theological Education...

So, what else can be done to provide high quality theological education, while at the same time, providing pastoral leadership in rural places? And, if we are going to tackle real issues about the need for leaders, how about we work to reduce or eliminate student debt at the same time? The Western North Dakota Synod, in partnership with Wartburg Theological Seminary, is in the process of launching a pilot project aimed at addressing those issues. The Rural Distributive Learning Cohort will allow students to enter a Master of Divinity Degree Program while serving in a congregational context. We believe that serving as a minister, while taking Master level courses, will help shape a candidate for Christ-centered service.

This program will not be for every student or for every congregation. In short, congregations will need to be relatively healthy - understanding they are called to look beyond themselves to serve their neighbor for Jesus' sake. Students will need to be self-motivated, able to juggle multiple tasks, and open for an adventure.

Our goal is to have two students accepted into this program by this fall. We look forward to sharing more with you about this program as it progresses.

Tilling the Soil...

It is not too late! There is still time to sign up for the “***Tilling the Soil***” workshop. This one day event is meant to spark our creative imagination and get us wondering where God is calling us to reach out in new locations and ways to proclaim God's grace and mercy given to the world through Jesus.

Come ***Till the Soil*** with us Saturday, April 9th from 9:30AM to 3:00PM. We will welcome Rev. Ruben Duran, Director of New Starts within the ELCA, and Rev. Keith Zeh, Director of Evangelical Mission for the NW Minnesota and Eastern North Dakota.

Together, we will talk about how the larger church can help identify, explore, and possibly launch new ministries. Often, this does not mean building a new building – rather, it means letting your imagination flow freely.

We invite you to grab a couple of people from your congregation to come, learn more, and see what kind of creativity might begin to well up.

Synod Assembly:

Now is the time to register for Synod Assembly. Our theme, “Living in God's Abundance”, will help us explore the abundance of gifts contained in our congregations and communities. We invite you to bring as many people as you would like, so, they, too, can learn about how God gifts people for the sake of serving others.

Once again, there will be an art show featuring the talents of people from the Western North Dakota Synod; please encourage people to participate. They can register their items through the synod web page.

Remember the Synod Mission Gala... It will once again be hosted by Lord of Life Lutheran Church. A limited number of tickets are available for the meal and auction of talents; get yours either online or by calling the synod office. We are also looking for items for the live and silent auctions; your donations are greatly appreciated!

Blessings,

Mark Narum

Serving as Bishop of the Western North Dakota Synod



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.