

## **Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission in Transition**

I have enjoyed the privilege and challenge to serve as the Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM) in transition for the past four months. Bishop Graham asked me to serve as DEM during the interim between when Rev. Phil Hirsch ended his time in this office and the next bishop will be called. When asked, my first reaction was, “Huh?” It was clear with some conversation and negotiating, and a lot of prayerful uncertainty that the invitation was the work of the Holy Spirit.

A primary purpose during this interim has been to help all of us realize and accept that the excellent work and variety of initiatives that Phil launched and managed were for the vitality of the synod and are the ongoing work of the synod. It was Phil’s goal that his work serve the pastors and people of the synod during and after his time as the DEM. The other purpose has been to ensure that the ongoing work of oversight by the DEM for the New and Renewing Missions Table and the Stewardship and Mission Support Table, along with the New Connections campaign, continued.

Separate reports by the leaders of each Table and New Connections about their responsibilities and actions are available as separate reports for you to read. Each group has been busy through the year, including during the interim. I am indebted to Rev. Shannon Anderson as the lead for the NRMT, Rev. Jeanette Leisk as the lead for the SMST, and Christy Hartigan as the New Connections Campaign Director for their diligent and consistent work. It has been a pleasure to work with them and they have made my entry and learning easy.

The clear and unambiguous role of the DEM is to help congregations grow numerically in two specific areas of their life and mission – active participants and financial resources to accomplish what they believe The Spirit is guiding them to do. These two areas are classically described as evangelism and stewardship. Even as you read those two words I suspect you had a reaction. And it may not have been positive. The partnership of the synod and congregation in these areas can change that.

Some of the ways that is already happening are:

- Training for every pastor serving a congregation in the synod to learn concepts and methods that they can share with the people of the congregation for making contacts, building relationships, and including new people who need to know they are cared for and loved by other people and by God. 46 pastors have participated in the training and 12 are currently involved and will complete it in November.
- Coaching for pastors and for congregation councils. Metro DC Coaches are available to help leaders prioritize and accomplish their goals and ministry. Rev. Nathan Swenson-Reinhold is the coaching coordinator.
- One-day workshops and training sessions about engagement and development. Six were offered in 2018 and three are planned for 2019.
- Consultation with the DEM about specific congregation goals and how to plan and finance them. 11 congregations were actively engaged in 2018. 8 of those are continuing and 4 congregations have become involved during 2019. These are detailed in the Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission through January 2019.

I am indebted to my partners in ministry in the synod office who have welcomed me and assisted me through their personal support, patient guiding, and wonderful humor. I am also grateful to my colleagues serving congregations in the synod for their encouragement during this transition.

Lead, Guided and Accompanied by The Spirit,  
Rev. Gary Rhinesmith