



Northern Texas - Northern Louisiana Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

The Rev. Dr. Kevin S. Kanouse

Bishop

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ in the NT-NL Synod:

+ *Grace and peace be unto you from God our heavenly Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.* +

At the 2010 Synod Assembly in Amarillo last month we celebrated that we are *Living DiscipleLife* and we made commitments to bring about some much needed changes in the way we do ministry together as congregations of this synod, focusing on *Leadership Formation for DiscipleLife*. Some of those changes are beginning to unfold even now as we move into the summer. Watch for upcoming opportunities to get involved.

In the meantime, we feel constrained to update you on our financial status after three months of this fiscal year, starting Feb. 1, 2010. The Synod Council adopted what they hoped would be a balanced spending plan for 2010 that included a reduction of \$ 54,400 over the Synod Assembly approved Mission Strategy. Those reductions included, among other things:

- \$ 21,228 to ELCA Churchwide Support (keeping our giving percentage at 47 %)
- \$ 10,000 in Seminary support
- \$ 10,000 in support to Briarwood
- \$ 10,000 in support to Lutheran Campus Ministry
- \$ 2,500 in support to Parish Lay Ministry Academy
- \$ 19,000 in Salaries and Benefits

Through the first three months of this fiscal year, however, we have received Current Fund income of \$ 316,298 on our reduced projected income of \$ 352,999, leaving us \$ 36,700 behind our projected reduced Spending Plan. Michael Weir, our Treasurer noted, in presenting the 2011 proposed Mission Strategy to the Assembly, that we expected to make additional cuts for 2010, primarily in the areas of staff, including salaries and benefits, in the amount of about \$ 39,000. We would like to let you know that those changes have been enacted and they include:

- Eliminating the position of Receptionist/Office worker completely (Debi Gebhardt's position was eliminated effective May 20)

- Changing the Youth and Family Ministry Position from 10 hours per week to Consultant for Synod Youth Events for which she will be paid per event she helps plan (Pr. Jamie Bruning may serve in this role effective June 15)
- Reducing the Hispanic/Latino Mission Coordinator's Position to half time from full time (Irma Banales, effective immediately)
- Reassigning administrative responsibilities previously covered by Debi Gebhardt to Judy Rommel and Irma Banales with the need to hire a part time bookkeeper.

We are likely to make additional staff reductions as the year progresses if income continues to fall short of our renewed expectations. Please keep in mind that these staff changes are in addition to those made more than a year ago when Pr. Stan Meyer's position was decreased to 85 % time and Pr. Jane Mar was called at 85 % time as well. Both work full time for less than full time pay. Clergy staff have not received pay increases since 2008.

As you can see the shortfall in giving to the work of the wider church has had profound effect on our ability to do ministry and on the personal lives of those who have served us faithfully for many years. We grieve these changes in programming and staff. For those who wanted to express their anger about the Churchwide Assembly decisions through reduced giving to the church, perhaps these dramatic changes to our ability to carry out our mission will provide some consolation.

We know that many of our congregations continue to suffer financially as much as the synod. We grieve with you and pray for you. Thank you for taking your financial stewardship seriously. We hold you all in prayer for your ministry and your steadfastness in faith and ask you to do the same for us. In addition, please discern within your leadership ways you can grow in your own congregational giving and in support of our joint ministries through the work of the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod. Thank you!

Grace and Peace in Christ,

Kevin S. Kanouse,
Bishop

Stephanie Varnum,
Vice-President