

**Report of the Vice President  
Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana Synod  
April 2018**



**In Mission Together**

The ELCA is us, sixty-five synods. The NT-NL synod is us, 106 congregations. The Synod Council is us, twenty-two elected members who are laity, Synodically Authorized Worship Leaders, and pastors. The Synod Council is us being accountable to one another, managing offerings and gifts, guiding and planning with the bishop and staff, and supporting and caring for one another. The NT-NL Synod Council is a vital part of our communication chain and our supporting arm. I deeply appreciate serving on the Synod Council with the opportunity to work with these wonderful church people from across our synod. My thanks to retiring council members – Ms. Angie Krug, Ms. Teddi Phillips, Mr. Leon Thane, and to Pastors Norma Cooper and Violeta Siguenza-Del Aguila who are finishing partial terms and willing to be elected to serve full terms. The Synod Council are elected leaders who help lead and guide us IN MISSION TOGETHER.

One of the goals when we built and moved to the DiscipleLife Center at Briarwood was to take advantage of modern technology and electronic communication set-ups to enable us to meet and work together in new, convenient ways. At our February 2018, meeting we had our first electronic meeting utilizing ZOOM technology. This allowed several members to participate from a distance via computer link. It went well, and we anticipate being able to do that again for winter meetings. Thanks to Tyna Oslie, Synod Administrator, Jason O'Neill, NT-NL Communications Manager, and Matt Baumhardt, Acting Director of Briarwood, for your hard work that allowed it to work so smoothly.

To help our congregations and leaders serve our common mission in the changing circumstances of our communities NT-NL provided several important learning experiences. The first was held in October 2017 at the Leadership Convocation and focused on coaching relationships. Coaching relationships are formed to help a leader think and reflect, be encouraged and challenged, and have a partner as he/she moves forward in a job or role or challenge. Coaching relationships demonstrate that we are IN MISSION TOGETHER. Thank you, Convocation Planning Team.

Additionally, the NT-NL Public Witness for Peace and Justice Team provided a workshop in March 2018, *“The Role of the Church in Undoing Racism.”* It was a day and a half of sharing personal stories and respectfully listening to those stories, personal pain, and expressions of hope. Racism arises from historical institutions and documents, as well as personal biases and attitudes, plus power. Racism hurts people of all ethnicities, nationalities and religions. Working for peace and justice is equally as important as the charitable ministries that Jesus commanded. This all is holy work where we are IN MISSION TOGETHER. Thank you, Public Witness Team.

NT-NL Vice President  
In Mission Together,  
Deacon Stephanie Varnum