

# SYNOD MINISTRY TEAM REPORTS



## **NT-NL Congregational Vitality Team** **Pastor Jeff Borgwardt, Team Leader**

During 2017 the New/Renewing ministry team has had a name transition to be consistent with the terminology used by the Domestic Mission Unit of the ELCA. We are now known as the Congregational Vitality Team. Although a name change sometimes seems like simply rearranging chairs, in this case, our team believes it is a significant change.

The focus of congregational vitality is on assisting congregations to be effective in their ministries in the lives of individuals, in the congregations, and in mission in the surrounding community. This is an ongoing process for all congregations, always, which is why our team believes that this is a significant change for our team and the congregations we work with in the synod. This focus of the team helps us to live into our synodical vision of being “in mission together.”

We live into this vision as a team by working with the revitalization, renewal, or redevelopment of existing congregations, as well as working with opportunities for new mission starts across our synod. Our team continues to work with several congregations in various stages of these processes. Our team members welcome a conversation, formally or informally, about what vitality means for you in the congregation where you are a member or where you serve as a leader.

As we have shifted to this focus on vitality, it also became clear that we needed to make a change in our team structure. We have divided our team into two groups of individuals, one of which is focused on the vitality of existing congregations, the other on the vitality of new mission starts. We will continue to be one team, meeting together for mutual support, Bible study, and the sharing ideas. It is an exciting time to be a part of the Congregational Vitality Team!

In early 2018, several of our team members attended an ELCA training event in Houston for Mission Developers and Redevelopers, for the purpose of being better able to support leaders who are called to those ministries. Additionally, team members also attended a Synodical Coaching training event held at Briarwood, so that we are better equipped to use coaching in our work, as it continues to be an effective way of guiding individuals and congregations to a place of health and vitality.

Our current team members include, Pastors Jeff Bergeron, Jeff Borgwardt, Doris Dupree Harris, Ernie Hinojosa, Yvonne Kiebler, Alicia Thompson-Summers, Neal White. Our staff liaison is Pastor Irma Bañales, DEM. We bid farewell and thank you to Pastor Brad Carroll for his service to our team, as he accepted a call to serve a congregation outside of NT-NL.

If you have questions, please contact any member of the team. We look forward to hearing from you and working with you.

In Christ’s service,  
Pastor Jeff Borgwardt  
Congregational Vitality Team Chair  
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## **Giving Public Witness to Peace and Justice Team**

### **Pastor Chuck Hubbard, Team Leader**

The Public Witness Team meets on the second Saturday of each month at Shepherd of Life Lutheran Church, Arlington. We welcome those who would like to work with us as we live out a profound sense of call as people of Jesus committed to healing in the world.

We acknowledge that many of the churches throughout the synod are doing that in their own way, addressing social needs in their own communities. The Public Witness team can be a helpful resource to the church as it attempts to intelligently and faithfully confront the social realities that are often divisive within the church itself: racism, human caused environmental degradation, the just treatment of women, immigrant and refugee care, as well as charitable relief for the hungry and the homeless.

A few things for which we are thankful . . .

. . . for the immigration attorneys and staff at Schwamkrug, Freshwater and Lopez (Richardson, TX) who conducted “Know Your Rights” presentations in a number of contexts for the benefit of those at risk for deportation and for the people who love them;

. . . for Shepherd of Life Lutheran Church, Arlington, for its willingness to establish a relationship with a non-Lutheran faith community and have courageous conversations on the reality of racism in our society, and for hosting such important events as the hearings on the proposed ELCA social statement on justice and women;

. . . for Rejoice Lutheran Church, Frisco, and its efforts to build a coalition across religious lines, so that the prevailing social issues faced by the people of Frisco might better be addressed; and

. . . for the faithful people of St. John Lutheran Church, Dallas, who in so many diverse ways bring attention to racism in our culture, believing that if we are willing to face it, we can change things for the better!

We just had our first workshop on “The Church’s Role in Undoing Racism”. The presenters, Mrs. Joyce James and the Rev. Joseph Barndt, provided compelling and hearable presentations on the need to understand deep roots of racism in American culture and its pervasiveness in our institutions.

It is estimated that life expectancy for people of color in America, particularly blacks, is a few years less than that of whites due to race related stress. Racism has physical consequences. National Geographic is taking a hard look at the evidence for institutionalized racism within its own business culture. That is a courageous step; it needs to be done by other institutions, including the church. Good News: We can do something to promote healing – including racial healing – in the world.

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