

NT-NL Vice Presidents Report  
NT-NL Synod Assembly  
April 24, 2021

### In Mission Together

I hope everyone is safe and healthy as we join in Mission Together. These past few months since we met as an assembly back in September have presented us some challenges and some hope. As the COVID-19 pandemic is still in our midst, numerous vaccines have been made available to help increase the immunity and lessen the effects of the virus. The hope is as more people get vaccinated and the immunity of the population increases, the closer we will get to be able to gather together in person safely in larger numbers.

February brought us one of the bigger and longer cold spells we have had in the past 10 years. Not only did the temperature drop below zero, but the power plants were not able to provide enough capacity to keep up with the demand. As a result of the power outages, a few individuals and some of our church buildings across the synod sustained damage from broken frozen water pipes. As the Synod staff reached out to congregations to get an assessment of the situations, people stepped up to help one another as best they could, and donations were being accepted through our Synod Disaster Fund. Donations were received both from both inside and outside our synod and these donations helped our congregations cover the expense of their deductible. This is a wonderful story of neighbors helping neighbors and people providing hope for others during a difficult period across our synod.

In March, we were presented another stewardship opportunity to share God's love and message to another group of individuals going through a turbulent time in their life. The Dallas Convention Center was set up as a FEMA "decompression" center to temporarily house approximately 2,300 migrant young men (15-17 years old). Although the entire effort was part of a response from the Dallas Area Interfaith group with the volunteers being organized by Catholic Charities, NTNL's DEM Pastor Irma Banales and Conferencia Latina Dean Pastor Jesus Escamilla led one of the early protestant communion liturgies to these individuals. As time went on, additional NTNL clergy offered their time and services to provide pastoral care to these young men. Again, when we are presented with challenges in our lives or the lives of others, it's encouraging to see members of our NTNL Synod step up to preach and show God's love and provide hope to others.

I want to thank the Synod council members for their time and leadership for taking care of council business done this past year. I would also like to thank Pastor Mike Masterson and Pastor Jeremy Ullrich for their input, dedication and leadership these past few years, as their terms on the Synod Council comes to an end. I would also like to thank Kristen Lorentzen for her years of service and her willingness to run again for another 3-year term on council. Also deserving of recognition are my fellow synod officers Treasurer Mark Bradley and Secretary Pastor Kelsey Fitting-Snyder. Mark does a magnificent job overseeing our synod budget and providing updates throughout the year as to what our status is when comparing our revenue to our expenses. Pastor Kelsey has done a wonderful job picking up the Secretary responsibilities and not missing a beat after taking over for our former Secretary Todd Weiss.

I would also like to extend a huge thank you to Bishop Gronberg and the entire synod staff which includes Pastor Irma Banales, Pastor Kris Totzke, Jeanne Heggen, and Jason O'Neill. The amount of work, effort, and leadership that this team does can be truly inspiring. Not only are they highly involved in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities within the synod, they have participated, volunteered, and stepped up into roles within our ELCA Churchwide organization to provide input and guidance on a national level. And as a result, Churchwide has recognized and appreciated the leadership of the NTNL. We are blessed to have staff that continually meets and exceeds the needs of our synod.

Finally, I would like to thank all the congregations of the NTNL for your continued support of the synod and churchwide organizations. Your support has allowed synod staff to provide pastoral and congregational care for those in need, provide educational and learning opportunities, to help receive and coordinate disaster relief efforts as needed, and assist congregations in supplying interim and permanent pastoral positions during transitional periods of congregations. A portion of the monetary contributions also were passed along to the ELCA Churchwide organization which will help fund upcoming national events for 2022, like the next Churchwide Assembly and the National Youth Gathering.

In closing I hope everyone has the opportunity to make the most of this coming year and the possibilities it can provide you. We have made it through a challenging year. When needs were recognized and the call went out for assistance, many replied and exceeded expectations with donations of both time and financial contributions. With the continued commitment of our synod members, we are poised to continue to make a positive impact in our communities.

Blessings,  
Tom Blaney  
NT-NL Vice President