

## Vice President's Report

Oregon Synod Assembly, May 10-12, 2019

As I look out my window it is raining again! I had planned my day based on yesterday's weather forecast of no rain, just cloudy skies. Well, time to shift plans and try something else. More rain, but wow – everything is so green, and the buds are ready to explode. It seems to be that way with the church. Yes, we live in a state where fewer people go to church or even call themselves Christians. Budgets are stressed and the pews are occupied with folks with grey hair *and* I see new ideas, new experiments and new opportunities ready to flower.

In my eight years as Vice President of the Oregon Synod I have seen Synod Council, Synod staff, and congregations learn to adapt and change. The challenges we face together have brought us to a point of boldly taking risks and exploring new and deeper ministries across the state. Our gaze has shifted from looking *inward* - asking questions about how we can save money or do the same things better or more efficiently - to looking *outward* - asking what we are being called to do in the world and who we can do it with. We are shifting from doing things *for* people to doing things *with* people.

Synod Council has the job of managing the business of the synod between annual assemblies. The council reviews roster appointments, develops policies, adjusts the budget, and strategizes in coordination with staff and other groups such as the mission table, our deans, and various committees. As we recognized the importance of congregational vitality, we became more proactive in listening and reaching out. We're supported training in transformational leadership, participated in regional workshops, and regularly hearing reports directly from the leaders who are leveraging grant money to expand and redefine what ministry is in Oregon.

Over the past eight years the Council has work to invest our New Beginning Funds at increasing levels. We realize that saving money for a rainy day in the middle of a rain storm is not good stewardship. We need to be able to try new ideas, take risks, and learn from various experiments not only for the good of the Oregon Synod but also for the good of the entire church. The ELCA has recognized this and is reaching out to us to partner in a variety of ways. In 2019 the ELCA will support a variety of Oregon work to the tune of almost a half million dollars. They would not invest in us if *you* were not doing such great things. And, we do this work collaboratively, developing ever stronger relationships with partner denomination churches at the local level and beyond.

As I look forward to the coming changes in Council officers and synod staff, I look for new ideas and perspectives and renewed energy to take on the challenges and opportunities that we don't yet recognize. Serving on ELCA Churchwide Council for 6 years and Synod Council for 8 has been a wonderful, amazing, and eye-opening experience that I will always treasure.

Everyone I have worked with has been a gift to me. All the members of Synod Council have been actively engaged and thoughtful leaders. Thank you! Synod staff: Jan Wierma, who has facilitated positive change in so many ways; Susan Kintner, who has worked tirelessly to help congregations and pastors get the right fit, caring deeply for all around her; Glenn Chase and Michael Keys, our DEMs whose creativity and close relationship with our ELCA Churchwide staff; Sarah Kruger, effectively stepping in to enable all around her to get things done – these are amazing people doing amazing work. Thank you!

I may look for sun on rainy days and rain on dry days, but in it all I give thanks. The earth is cared for. Our church is cared for. Our family and friends are cared for. Thank you for the privilege of service.

Respectfully Submitted,

Deborah Chenoweth