

Report of Bishop Steven L. Ullestad

June 15, 2014

“The Northeastern Iowa Synod makes Christ known by strengthening the witness and service of the whole church. Synod ministries support and develop leaders, focus on mission and network the effective ministries of our synod.”

This past year has been a year of much joy.

We have expanded our support of the Young Adults in Global Mission and the relationship with our companion church in Hungary.

We are a leader in the church in support for the Malaria Campaign. Tens of thousands of children in Africa are alive today because of your generosity.

We continue to grow in our support of the World Hunger Appeal and general mission support of the larger mission of the church.

We are leading the church in using social media for evangelical outreach to all generations.

Our youth ministry is one of the most comprehensive approaches in the church, beginning with the ministry of our Home Life Network, our middle school ministry, LYO, WILYDE and young adult ministry house out of the UNI Student Center.

Pastor Jenna Couch shares more about the youth ministry of our synod. (video)

Congregations are revitalized for mission as they study the ministry and mission needs in their geographical area and form new partnerships for mission. Cross Roads Lutheran Parish, served by Pastor David Werges and Diaconal Minister Elayne Werges, is but one example. (video)

Our thanks to Coco Lyons and the Wartburg College communications department for developing these video clips about our synod ministries. We offer one more video about a ministry that is woven into the identity of the Northeastern Iowa Synod, the Bremwood Residential Treatment Center of Lutheran Services in Iowa. (video)

And new ideas for service continue to pop up, like the Mission Possible project at Wartburg Seminary that was featured yesterday morning. We are blessed by your prayers, hard work and generosity. Thank you.

(video)

This is also a time to offer our thanks to our out-going Vice President, Mary Jo Rathe. Mary Jo has shared with you her journey in her report to the assembly that is recorded on page 33. I simply want to thank her for her eagerness to serve the synod in this way during one of the most challenging times in our history. I don't think that I was actually able to complete my sentence requesting her service before she said "Yes." And Mary Jo was fully aware of all that was going on in our synod four years ago. With grace, conviction and commitment she has offered her patient, steady leadership when we have needed it the most.

Mary Jo is a person who lives the faith with integrity. Her involvement in the congregation is integral to her life. Mary Jo and Jim model the walk of a Christian marriage, they have opened their home to welcome children and made them their own. Her witness has been instrumental in what God is doing to create a new synod of joy, hope and service of “the least” among us that welcomes all into the community of faith.

I will always remember what you have given us Mary Jo and we all will continue to be grateful for your witness. Please join me in thanking the Vice President of the Northeastern Iowa Synod, Mary Jo Rathe.

As we look to a future together of seeking to faithfully follow Jesus, we will continue to listen to God, listen to the cries of those in need, connect people and resources with mission and give thanks for all that God is doing in and through the Northeastern Iowa Synod, I would like to try to say thank you to this synod, my partners in ministry in the synod office and my family.

Henry Mancini’s daughter wrote him a note once with words of gratitude. Her intent was not to write a song but to simply say “Thank you.” He couldn’t resist putting the words to music and I thank Pastor Arnold Flater for helping me connect these words of thanks with pictures representing those who have sustained me in the ministry.

Video.