

Northeastern Iowa Synod – Bishop Steve Ullestad

Thank you Bishop! Greetings to you from Portico Benefit Services! My name is Jennifer Prinz, and I am your Portico regional representative. Portico is a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We partner with rostered leaders and with congregations to strengthen leaders for ministry. It's a joint effort in 3 areas:

1. ELCA organizations are called upon to provide for their leaders, and give them time to tend to their well-being.
2. Leaders are expected to take care of themselves so they are better able to shape healthy congregations in changing, often challenging, times.
3. Portico is responsible for delivering cost-effective benefits and resources that help leaders strengthen their financial, emotional, and physical well-being.

This partnership isn't just our idea. Actually, the ELCA advocates for healthy, resilient leaders through its Philosophy of Benefits. The Vision and Expectations document our rostered leaders agree to abide by emphasizes self-care and fiscal responsibility because *all are stewards of the life God has given us*. We look to the words of Jesus, who came that we *might have life, and have it abundantly*. (John 10:10) At Portico, that abundant life includes striving for health of body, mind, money, and spirit.

You may be thinking, 'That's great. But does it really affect me?' It does! Remember, we work together to build up healthier leaders. Rostered leaders, let's start with you. **Can you name something you're doing to show up as an example of wellness for your congregation?** Maybe it's getting regular exercise. Maybe it's sticking to a budget. Are you maintaining healthy boundaries – like taking your day off? At the Portico table, there's a list of five suggestions. These suggestions will help you to be a healthier leader. I've also got information about two interesting benefit opportunities: Portico is introducing online medical care and will be enhancing our social purpose ELCA retirement funds. Also, congratulations on earning Portico's 2% discount again 2 years in a row! (79%)! Collectively, the congregations in your synod will save about \$36,000 this year on ELCA health contributions. Thank you to everyone who took the health assessment or encouraged someone else to take it.

Congregation members, here's a question for you: **Doesn't your church deserve a leader who's well-rested, confident, and resilient?** Why not take your pastor for a salad instead of a donut? Respect your leaders day off. Try not to text, email, message or call (unless it's an emergency). Work on wellness together. Our congregations are an incredible gift. They're where people hear the word of God, receive the sacraments, and experience the life-giving support of Christian community. When your leader is healthy, your church is stronger. Please stop by the Portico table during a break and pick up a list of five ways you can do your part to support your leader's effort to be well. We also know providing benefits can have a significant impact on your budget. I have a helpful handout that explains what you need to know about the cost of ELCA health benefits.

One leader at a time. One congregation at a time. We each do our part to strengthen healthy, resilient leaders who shape healthy, resilient congregations. Thank you for all you do, and may God bless your ministry.