

“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that [Christ Jesus] might be the firstborn within a large family.” Romans 8:28-29.

Dear friends in Christ,

Many members of SKLC have heard that I have been called to be the Dean for the new Parkland Mission District. Most members probably are wondering what all this means. First, my call and ministry at Shepherd King Lutheran remains. The call to be Dean is an addition to my congregational pastoral duties. The Dean serves as a servant of the Bishop. The North American Lutheran Church (NALC) is a continental Church with congregations in Canada, the United States, Mexico and some Caribbean nations. There are over 500 congregations within the NALC. We have one presiding Bishop who is the overseer of this whole Church. Obviously that is too large a geographic and demographic region for one person. So the NALC sub-divides into “mission districts” with a Dean as the Bishop’s representative in that region.

Generally a mission district would be a geographic area encompassing between 3 and 12 congregations. Within Canada, we have had one mission district (the Canadian Mission District or CMD) encompassing from Winnipeg to Vancouver for geography and currently 35 congregations. The CMD has been overseen by one Dean, who also has a full-time call to a congregation. Obviously this is too large a geographic and congregational amalgamation for that Dean adequately to tend over. So, (and with full disclosure – through past experience your pastor has been advocating for this up-coming transformation) the current CMD will be reformed into 4 new mission districts, with a dean for each mission district. This move should be completed when the CMD meets in convocation in April.

I have advocated for this transition and believe that it will be good for all our NALC congregations as we do the mission that the LORD has entrusted to us. The smaller mission districts should allow neighboring congregations to get to know one another better and to share concern for one another better. Our new mission district – to which I have been called the Dean to serve – will be the Parkland Mission District. Its boundaries roughly are Ponoka and Stettler to the northeast, Strathmore as the eastern edge, south to Granum and west to the coast – a total of 11 congregations. (There are not any congregations outside Alberta within this new mission district currently; however there are pastors living in southern BC who will be under my deanship.)

So what does a Dean do? The Dean visits congregations to provide guidance and counsel. The Dean provides pastoral care to the clergy and their families. The Dean will gather with all other deans in the NALC and the Bishop in an annual retreat. The Dean will convene an annual convocation for the mission district. The Dean will be on the Canadian Mission Region (the replacement for the current CMD) council. Some administration duties, but not much more than I currently do as the Secretary for the CMD (which will end for me at Convocation in April.)

So, I remain your pastor but will have some pastoral oversight for colleagues and congregations close to us. I previously was the Dean for our local region when we belonged to the ELCIC, so I have experienced some of this call before. As the LORD God calls each of us to ministry, the LORD God equips each individual for that calling also. Thanks be to God.

In Christ forever,

Pastor Kevin.