

Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod: Bolder Brighter Together

“Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:16

Bringing us, the 53 ministries across Arkansas and Oklahoma, together - may God embolden our ministry and brighten our witness to the radical grace and love of God revealed in Jesus for everyone!

I've been serving with you for a little more than two and a half years and I am convinced that we are better together. When congregations have opportunities to learn from each other, to encourage one another, and to pool resources to do what can't be done alone – we are stronger, more creative, and more faithfully reflecting the good news of Jesus.

Keeping this networked image of synod, of Church, in mind, this last year has been focused on creating places for congregations and their leaders to learn from and support each other. One of the ways we hope to learn from each other is through Compass – a multifaceted approach for engaging congregations in the kind of change needed for today. At the heart of Compass is congregations walking along side other congregations, generating ideas and new ways of being and doing Church. For Compass to be fully realized we need people to serve on project teams (design teams), to be part of listening weekends, to consult and share expertise/passions, to be congregation coaches (care coordinators), and to show up ready to learn and share.

Compass has four parts.

1. **Ready to Renovate**, a resource or innovation “lab” generating ideas, resources, and energy around preparing for deep change. The Curiosity Cards are an example of this.
2. **360+ Accompaniment**, an opportunity for congregations to invite a team of people from congregations in our synod who want nothing more than for the congregation to thrive. This team gathers information, listens attentively, shares what they observe, and helps the congregation take steps toward being the best version of themselves for the sake of God's work in the world.
3. **Mission Planning**, a guide for creating a comprehensive and ongoing plan for ministry renovation.
4. **Network Summits**, calling people together to share learning and grow in understanding and hope, the first summit is a Small Church Summit for our smallest congregations.

It is my pleasure in this report to announce that Compass has the support of the ELCA Churchwide who have agreed to invest \$50,000 into the Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod's Compass initiative!

Conway, AR. The Conway Ministry Exploration Team has transitioned to call committee. To date, we have interviewed two possible mission developers and are still searching. Please pray for this new opportunity.

Managing God's Abundance – Whole Life Stewardship Program. Our synod Discipleship Team (formerly the Stewardship Table) has worked hard to create a year-round stewardship program, Managing God's Abundance. This program features four attractive posters, trifold pamphlets with ideas for individuals and households, and monthly bulletin inserts. Congregations can use this as a way to introduce and reinforce whole-life stewardship – living/managing life in a way that is pleasing to God. So far approximately 44% of our congregations are participating. This program is not free, but because of your mission support (benevolence from congregations) we are able to offer it at \$36/congregation which helps cover some of the cost of shipping. For some congregations this makes having a stewardship program possible. If your congregation hasn't signed up yet, it is not too late – simply contact me before May 31 to get on board for the next quarter.

Workshops & Retreats. This January I created a menu of workshops and retreats available to our congregations – the menu is attached at the end of this report. I am pleasantly surprised at the number of congregations that responded to this right away. Since the 2017 Synod Assembly, I've led nine retreats or workshops. The most popular request is for council retreats.

Preaching. Since the 2017 Synod Assembly, I preached and worshipped with 23 of our congregations. The best part of this work is learning, worshipping, and being with you in your congregation – so please invite me!

Youth Leadership. One of the priorities of our synod, is leadership and faith development particularly with our youth. LYO is doing just that and I'm grateful that you see it as a priority. Since we last met, the Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO) has organized, led, and participated in a weeklong mission road trip throughout the synod (visiting 10 churches spread over 1000 miles), the annual Labor Day Gathering hosted this year by Prince of Peace, Hot Springs, AR and the Younger Youth Gathering hosted this year by Good Shepherd, Fayetteville, AR. Jona Burnett is working with youth leaders and groups to prepare for the ELCA Youth Gathering this summer in Houston.

Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod: *Bolder Brighter Together.* We are living in anxious times. I am grateful that, *with your leadership*, our scrappy band of congregations join the light each has been entrusted with to make a bold and bright witness to Jesus!

Respectfully submitted,



Elizabeth Albertson
DEM/Assistant to the Bishop for Youth & Family Ministry



ARKANSAS-OKLAHOMA SYNOD
Boldly Sharing God's Grace with Everyone!

Pastor Liz Albertson

AR-OK Director for Evangelical Mission
& Assistant to the Bishop

2018 Workshops & Retreats

Invite Pastor Liz to preach, lead worship and/or create your own workshop or retreat. Below are some workshop and retreat ideas.

Workshop Ideas (45-90 minutes)

Being Lutheran in the Buckle of the Bible Belt. A conversation on what makes Lutherans distinctive.

For Such a Time as This. A closer look at Esther, the story of God working through a young girl caught up in the chaos of things beyond her control. What can we learn from Esther for ministry in time such as this today?

One Minute Faith Stories. Walk away from this workshop with your own, personal 100-word faith story.

Welcome to the Pigpen. Let's talk about real life stewardship – managing our lives in a way that is pleasing to God. Note: the word “stewardship” comes from an old English word meaning “sty-warden.” In other words, the manager of the pig pen.

Ready, Set, Go! This workshop is designed to help move a good idea into a plan. To make the best use of our time together, there may be pre-work for this workshop.

Loving God Recharge. Here's a chance to practice 2-3 spiritual practices and imagine how you might make it your own.

Retreat Ideas (half – full day)

Called to do what? Church Council 101. Healthy congregations have clear communication and decision making structures. This retreat is about helping councils better understand their role as leaders of the congregation's ministry.

Won't You be My Neighbor? God asks you and me to “love our neighbor as ourselves.” So let's get into the neighborhood, look around, and listen. What are your neighbor's passionate about? What keeps them up at night? Where is God already at work in your neighborhood? How can we be good neighbors? After getting into the neighborhood, we will come together to make a plan for engaging God's work through our neighbors.

From Ideas to Action. This is the beginning, the “*sketch on a napkin*” time for imagining the Church God wants you to be! We will draw out the wisdom, creativity and unique skills of your team and congregation; explore what God is inviting you to be about; and develop the beginnings of a 6-12 month plan. You will leave energized and with the first concrete steps of a plan.