



MEET THE SYNOD STAFF



Bishop Daniel G. Beaudoin

*Bishop of the
Northwestern Ohio
Synod*



Deacon Sherry Krieger

*Assistant to the Bishop
for Strengthening
Parishes & Parish
Development*



Pastor Sarah Schaaf

*Assistant to the Bishop
for Emerging Church &
Community
Engagement*



Chris Fye

*Director for
Generosity*



Cassie Mugler

*Director of
Administration*



Cheryl Sondergeld

*Director of
Leadership
Development*



Calla Gilson

*Director of
Outreach*



Linda Henschen

Business Manager



Jacob Henry

*Governance and
Policy Specialist*



Brent Gnagey

*Technology
Specialist*



Diane Stultz

*Administrative
Assistant*



**“So then, a sabbath rest still remains
for the people of God”**

Hebrews 4:9

**O God, on this day you open the hearts of your
faithful people by sending into us your Holy
Spirit. Direct us by the light of that Spirit, that
we may have a right judgment in all things and
rejoice at all times in your peace, through Jesus
Christ, your Son and our Lord, who lives and
reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever.**

Amen.

(Evangelical Lutheran Worship)



Dear Friends in Christ,

While on the way out of the Land of Promise; while on the way to escape the fury of his brother, Esau; while on the way to a place of rest and security; while on the way to a new place, Jacob has a dream.

God does some of God's best work, when we humble our anxious minds, rest our weary souls, and open our lives to God's will and God's ways. "Less of us" has this beautiful way of helping us to experience more of God, which is what Jacob experienced while on the way to a new place.

In Genesis 28, we read that Jacob is on his way from Beersheba to Haran. As the sun is setting, he selects a stone, sets it under his head and falls asleep. Jacob dreams about a ladder reaching all the way to heaven; with angels ascending and descending upon it.

Then God is right beside Jacob, saying, "I am God, the God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac. I am giving the ground on which you are sleeping to you and to your descendants. Your descendants will be as the dust of the Earth; they will stretch from west to east and from north to south..."

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." As we learn in this story from Genesis: God shows up in the gift of rest and God shows up as we journey to a new place.

God is leading the Northwestern Ohio Synod to a new place. A place where our mission is fulfilled, as together we are "Sent by the Crucified and Risen Jesus to Make Disciples, Equip Leaders, Strengthen Parishes, and Nurture New Communities, for the Renewal of Northwestern Ohio and the World."

And a place where together our values are lived:

Bold Hope
Expansive Curiosity
Authentic Community
Radical Love

What follows is a collection of inspiring "On the Way" stories that illuminate the work that God is doing through us as we pursue our mission, live out our values, and journey together to a new place.

Bless you,



Bishop Daniel G. Beaudoin



SENT BY THE CRUCIFIED AND RISEN JESUS TO:
JOHN 20:21



FOR THE RENEWAL OF NORTHWESTERN OHIO AND THE WORLD
REVELATION 21:5A



TOGETHER WE SERVE WITH...

BOLD HOPE

EXPANSIVE CURIOSITY

AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY

RADICAL LOVE

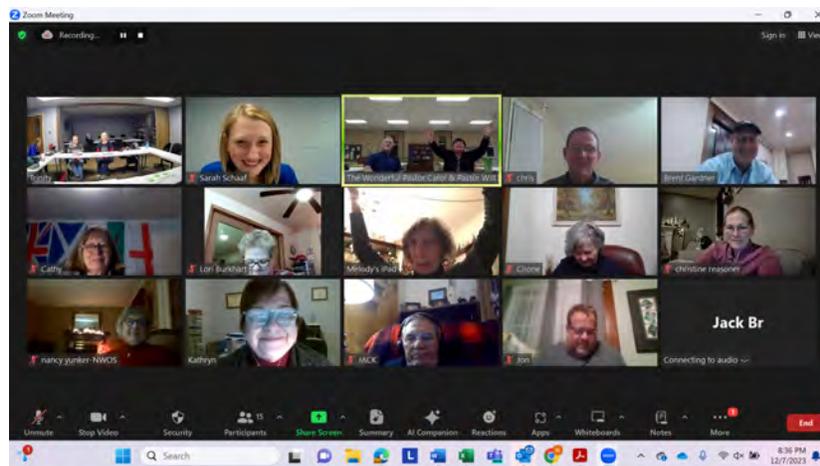


GROWING IN FAITH: DIAKONIA

GROWING IN FAITH: DIAKONIA is a lay education program designed to accompany leaders in living into their baptismal calling to follow Jesus. Every Thursday night lay leaders gather on zoom with instructors and folks from all over Northern Ohio to grow together. They study worship, scripture, history, spiritual practices, the confessions, pastoral care, ethics, family systems, proclamation, diversity training and so much more. Pastor Ashley Rosa-Ruggieri, an instructor for New Testament says, "I love teaching GROWING IN FAITH: DIAKONIA because I get the opportunity to encourage curiosity in lay leaders who are excited to learn and follow Jesus together."



"When GROWING IN FAITH: DIAKONIA began in Northwestern Ohio the goal was to enliven the faith of lay leaders. I never would have imagined how deeply our lay leaders would enliven my own faith. But as I watch my colleagues passionately teach and share their faith, as I watch our lay leaders learn and grow in their knowledge of themselves and God: I am filled with deep hope. I truly believe that God has given us everything we need to step into the future," says Pastor Sarah Schaaf, Assistant to the Bishop.



In the fall of 2023, we invited lay leaders from Northeastern Ohio Synod to participate in classes. In the fall of 2024, we will launch GROWING IN FAITH: NORTHERN OHIO, a collaboration between our synods, with new opportunities to learn and grow.

To explore the next opportunity to GROWING IN FAITH visit www.nwosdiakonia.org.



NEW GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS

In the last few years the Northwestern Ohio Synod has established a companion relationship with the Iglesia Luterana Mexicana, the Mexican Lutheran Church (ILM). This new companionship provides endless opportunities to express bold hope as well as joy in learning, growing, and appreciating our sisters and brothers in Mexico.



The Ecumenical Seminary of Mexico and Latin America, provides a robust and bold theological education for people all over the Spanish Speaking World. The Augsburg Lutheran Seminary is embedded in the ecumenical seminary which is an exciting model for broad based theological education. An ELCA missionary, the Rev. Dr. David Brondos, teaches at the Seminary and around the world in online classes. The ILM is involved in bold global ministry.

The ILM focuses on issues of violence and exploitation, especially of women, and is present through the ministry of far flung Lutheran congregations around the country. The ILM boldly stands with the most vulnerable.

The ILM is also engaged in the complex and painful tapestry of migration issues, boldly providing essential and life-saving care to people from as far away as Pakistan, and Venezuela who wish to find a new and safe home.



NEW GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS CONTINUED

Bishop Daniel Beaudoin has visited congregations and leaders in Guadalajara, Mexico, and the Northwestern Ohio Synod has also welcomed President Roberto Trejo as a guest among us. Our companions are bold witnesses to the love, justice and mercy of God. A group of representatives from our Synod went to Mexico in the summer of 2023 making friends, learning about ministries of the church, and worshipping with God's people there. It is exciting to think that we may be able to do that again before long.



This companionship, which is so relevant to the many issues and opportunities faced by both Mexico and the United States, will be blessed by God, and all who embrace this friendship will be challenged and blessed also. This gives us an opportunity, literally, to love our neighbors. If you wish to learn more about this new companionship, you are invited to be in touch with Pastor Nathan Tuff or Calla Gilson.



MAKERSPACE

“Expansive Curiosity requires research and listening.

We have found success by finding the niches (needs) where we can use our resources to make a difference and build community. I believe our ministry has grown because we provide well organized experiences that exceed expectations and include opportunities for conversation and prayer.”

Kate Philabaum

When the people of St. Paul's, Toledo wanted to make a difference in their community, they needed to get curious and creative. How could they help people in a way that made sense for the parish? The answer to this question was the MAKERSPACE MINISTRY; a ministry that provides access to space, tools, and education for different types of crafting and carpentry.

The MAKERSPACE MINISTRY began with a partnership with “Let's Build” making beds for underserved students. HeArt Gallery director and St. Paul's Art Minister says, “During that process we discovered that most of those who volunteered to build beds did not know how to use basic tools yet were eager to learn. The success of the bed building project left us curious about what else could be done to positively impact our community while simultaneously teaching basic carpentry skills”.



This curiosity led to partnerships with Historic South, the OH Innocence program, and summer Service Learning Camps.

“Our partners continued to provide volunteers interested in helping the community, while we provided the resources, space and instruction for that to happen.”



MAKERSPACE CONTINUED

What's next for the MAKERSPACE MINISTRY?

Volunteer opportunities that have a social impact! Projects will include solar powered suitcases to recharge phones (Kenya), compost bins for food waste recycling program (Toledo Metroparks), refurbished furniture (women's shelter), herb planting boxes (Toledo Grows), and intergenerational projects (Office of Aging Kinship program).

ST. PAUL'S TOLEDO
428 N. ERIE • KATE@STPAULSTOLEDO.ORG

**MakerSpace
Dinner DIY**
Tuesdays 4-7pm
soup & craft

Plus partnerships with
Let's Build
OH Innocence Program
DOA Kinship Prog
Toledo Grows
Girl Scouts
Service Learning Camps

Check it out!

If you'd like to get involved with this ministry, contact Kate Philabuam at kate@stpaulstoleado.org or sign up to be a part of Dinner DIY. This weekly program (Tuesdays 4-7pm) offers a 90-minute wood/craft project along with healing conversation and prayer over a bowl of soup.



HOPEWOOD OUTDOORS

Formerly Lutheran Outdoor Ministries of Ohio (LOMO), HOPEWOOD OUTDOORS remains curious about what it means to serve God's people where they are. Still offering engaging and hands-on experiences, this re-branding brings to life the mission of HopeWood: "bringing people together to experience Christ through natural settings and programs' and their vision," connecting all people to faith and nature for a changing world."



Executive Director Pastor Drew Tucker says, "We envision our future as one of mutual support. We believe this looks like more people using our sites, more often, for different types of programming AND where we are more present alongside congregations in your communities. With the growth of Morrow County, we see an opportunity for new programming on State Route 61: perhaps an event non-profit storefront, near the Gatehouse. There are also opportunities to grow the use of HopeWood Shores (Camp Luther) outside of summer family

camp experiences, including weddings, graduation celebrations, and other events. For HopeWood Connect (LOMO Outreach), we're already growing our offerings with camp-ins on site with congregations, as well as providing retreats, leadership development, and strategic planning support for congregational partners."

What's in store for the future of HopeWood? "We've had a great start to the year! 100 people came to HopeWood Pines for a confirmation retreat in March. We're also planning a renewed women's retreat for September in conjunction with The Lantern Fellowship. We also have new programs on the books; we hosted a special event for the April 8th Solar Eclipse, and a new retreat led by Earth and Cup (including Emanuel Marion's own Pastor Mike Poole) September 13-15. Christ is at work growing current programs and leading us to new opportunities. We're grateful for this Spirit-led evolution and for your partnership in it as we grow with God!"

Visit www.HopeWoodOutdoors.org or email guestrelations@hopewoodoutdoors.org to get connected to events, volunteering opportunities, and ways to support!



ANSWERING THE CALL: MINISTRY IN NWOS

'In authentic community we enter the dance of faith to journey alongside each other to encourage and build up the body of Christ.'

Rev. Carol Pretorius (St. Peter, Delphos)

Where do pastors come from?

For many years most of us answered that question...“from the seminary.” But in truth, that answer is not, and never has been accurate. Pastors have always come from the authentic community of Christ. They come from the Church which raised them, saw and nurtured gifts in them, and often supported them financially and emotionally through seminary education and ordination. We didn't see it that way because those called into ministry left the community, went away to college and came out of seminary to serve in a congregation anywhere in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA); they rarely came home.



Times have changed and raising up leaders has changed drastically. Where do pastors come from in 2024? They come from within one's own worshipping community or from a neighboring community, and many stay in the community while they go to seminary.



While it is true that there are fewer pastors in the ELCA, it is also true that the Holy Spirit has NOT stopped raising up leaders to serve Christ's church. God always provides leaders at the right time. In 2022, there were approximately 100 total graduates from ELCA Seminaries across the United States, and there were nine-times that many openings to be filled throughout the ELCA.



ANSWERING THE CALL: MINISTRY IN NWOS CONTINUED

“When your sisters and brothers in Christ recognize the gifts you have been given by God to shepherd God’s people, and then support your call to Word and Sacrament financially, in prayer, and frequent encouragement, it affirms God’s calling on your life.”

Rebecca West-Estell (Memorial, Toledo)



However, in that same year, 2022, the Northwestern Ohio Synod (NWOS) celebrated six ordinations of seminary graduates. Although this synod did not receive one candidate from the ELCA Churchwide organization, the Holy Spirit raised up six new fully ordained pastors from within our midst, from the authentic communities who nurtured them along.

In that year, six of our parishes gained a fully seminary-trained and ordained pastor because they were willing and courageous enough to try something new in helping to raise up a new leader while they both served the parish and attended seminary. These leaders were all shaped through the “apprenticeship model”. The alternative seminary education programs that these now-ordained-pastors graduated from were:

[Luther Seminary's 4-year Distributive Learning program](#)

[Wartburg Seminary's Collaborative Learning program](#)

[Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary's TEEM \(Theological Education for Emerging Ministries\) program](#)



To learn more about these programs visit: nwos-elca.church/candidacy



ANSWERING THE CALL: MINISTRY IN NWOS CONTINUED

“For me, the two greatest strengths of being raised up for ministry by my community were the authentic interest of my community in my growth, and perhaps even more importantly, the safe space my community gave me. I was given the space to try new things, but I was also given space to fail without fear.”

David Frye (West Toledo Parish: All Saints & Epiphany)

“These are unprecedented times...”

or so we think! In reality, the Holy Spirit has never stopped moving in our midst. These are simply times for worshipping communities to authentically lean into the Holy Spirit, to lean into doing things a little differently, to lean into becoming aware of those in our midst who love Jesus



and genuinely exhibit ministerial gifts. Then we get to whisper in their ear the love of God that is affirming their call into ministry and lean into nurturing these potential leaders along as they discern and take a leap of faith that brings them into service, seminary training and fully into ordained ministry, right here among us!

These are the days for leaders to be raised from within or next door through true faithful partnership, and through the value and experience of authentic community.



SHARING OUR FAITH: OREGON & TOLEDO THEATRE COMMUNITY

“St. Mark’s outreach to the theatre community has been an unintentional but successful one. As we build relationships, we share our faith through our words and actions. That’s what authentic community is about.”

Pastor Beth Giller

The theatre community is alive and thriving in the Northwestern Ohio Synod, especially in the Oregon and East Toledo area! With three dedicated children’s theatre groups (Junior Limelighters, RAM Drama, and the Oregon Community Theatre Children’s Theatre), an established community theatre (Oregon Community Theatre), and two high school theatre programs (Clay High School and Stritch High School), there are many ways for the community to gather together to tell stories and support local art. This support has continued to grow through dedicated rehearsal space, areas for set building, and a full recording studio to supplement existing music curriculum at Clay High School.



This support is also apparent in the life and ministry of St. Mark, Toledo! The people of St. Mark support both Pastor Beth Giller as she directs a children’s show every summer and Youth and Family Life Director, Emily Hemminger, who serves as Music Director for area shows. These commitments allow Pastor Beth and Emily to build deep relationships and nurture authentic community with area families.



SHARING OUR FAITH: OREGON & TOLEDO THEATRE COMMUNITY CONTINUED

“‘Theatre people’ are similar to ‘church people’ in that they want to give of their time and talents to produce something that inspires and enlightens an audience or congregation.” says Pastor Beth Giller. “In the process, an authentic and purposeful community is built. The collaboration between the theatre groups is notable: we share space, costumes, microphones, lights, props, set pieces...If it can be used in a production, it has probably been borrowed from or loaned to another group.”

Many members of St. Mark are involved in theatre and many newer congregational members have some connection to the theatre community.

Would you like to be a part of this ministry?

- Donate your interesting vintage pieces to St. Mark, which serves as the primary costume storage space for area theaters.
- Watch for opportunities to be a part of or attend a show in Oregon or with the Epiphany Players at Epiphany Lutheran Church.
- Contact Pastor Beth Giller at (419) 699-3442 or pastorgiller@gmail.com for questions and information.



ST. JOHN BUILDERS

“If we can build homes in other communities, why can’t we build homes here?”



That is the question that birthed ST. JOHN BUILDERS a ministry that to date has built and repaired around 20 houses in Mercer County. In 2023 alone they provided 12 handicap accessible ramps. It all began back when a group from St. John Lutheran in Celina were working with Habitat for Humanity to build homes in other communities. They wondered if they could partner with local folks to make an impact in their own community.

Now ST. JOHN BUILDERS gathers volunteers from not just St. John's but also Immaculate Conception Catholic Parish, Grand Lakes United Methodist Church, and Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church. They partner with neighbors, contractors, trade workers, and the recipient to offer sustainable solutions for families, building a home that they will own.

To learn more about how radical love is made known through the work of ST. JOHN BUILDERS or to support this ministry through donations of time or resources, explore their Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/stjohnbuilders.



LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES

“Our ministry in all of our services area, is one that is presented to those seeking services with love, kindness, and grace.”

Tracia Jaksetic



Photo by Jeremy Schneider

For more than 110 years, LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICES OF NORTHWESTERN OHIO has been serving the people of northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan. With a focus on meeting the needs of the community with compassion and love, LSS services include:

- Emergency Choice Food Pantry which serves thousands of people every year
- Behavioral Health Counseling services
- Re-Entry Program that helps people returning from incarceration find a new life
- Financial Stability Program

LSS Vice President Tracia Jaksetic says, “LSS meets clients where they are and works with them on their personal goals whatever those might be and whatever time during their treatment, or services they are receiving. We provide services in a loving environment and work with our clients on their strengths and build upon them. We work with each individual to try and meet their needs with the services we provide, and we refer to other community agencies as needed so that the clients can get their needs met.”



Photo by Jeremy Schneider

Interested in supporting LSS? Support their ministry by:

1. Volunteering in the food pantry: helping clients shop for food and deliver it to their cars
2. Making food and monetary donations: Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Monetary donations can be mailed to 2149 Collingwood Blvd., Toledo, 43620, or securely at www.lssnwo.org
3. Spreading the word about LSS in your community! Most clients come from referrals from community members, family, and friends. Contact Jeremy Schneider at (419) 243-9178 to have LSS speak with you and your group.



FILLING HOMES

“We believe that all people are created in the image of God and that each person has a strong potential for growth. We embody radical love by embracing the uniqueness of those we serve, prioritizing their voices, needs, and experiences.”

Carol Slight, Vice President

Rooted in faith, FILLING HOMES supports people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, enriching lives full of value, hope and choice within their community. Carrie Filling Vajen, founder, started this ministry over 65 years ago to support people with nowhere else to go. FILLING HOMES continues it's work as the hands, feet, and mouth of Jesus Christ as they show compassion to all and are committed to continue to do God's work and the ministry that Carrie started.

Vice President Carol Slight says, “The mission of our founder Carrie Filling Vajen, the mission of FILLING HOMES was rooted in the teachings of Jesus and emphasized by love, compassion, dignity and respect. Carrie knew these Christian values needed to be the foundation of the home she created; so faith based we have always been and faith based we will always be. Put simply, as followers of Jesus, we are here to serve.”



Interested in ways to plug into the ministry of FILLING HOMES?

- Volunteer: There are many ways to volunteer at Filling Homes. These activities include assisting with one of the day Habilitation programs, recreational activities, Chapel services and gardening. Volunteers also work behind the scenes showing support by performing clerical tasks, working in laundry, housekeeping or maintenance areas.
- Join the Women's Guild: Much support over the past 65 years has been the hands-on service provided by the Women's Guild. The members of the Guild identify the needs of Filling Homes residents and step up to ensure those needs are met.
- God's Work – Our Hands Sunday: This Annual Day of service is an excellent opportunity for congregations to join together in accomplishing good for those receiving Filling Homes services.

Visit www.fillinghome.org to learn more!



GENACROSS LUTHERAN SERVICES

GENACROSS LUTHERAN SERVICES is a social ministry organization with a 160-year legacy of sharing compassion and love to individuals in need.

“Providing compassionate care and services is at the core of our mission,” said Rick Marshall, Genacross President/CEO. “We exist to respond to God’s call to serve others in need of a helping hand.”

As a ministry of the church, Genacross is called to serve others through youth services, affordable senior housing, assisted living, long-term care, home health care, and skilled nursing and rehabilitation services. This ministry can look like providing therapy and a place to call home for youth who have been neglected and abused and come to Genacross with their possessions in a trash bag. It can also look like providing a home and daily assistance to an older adult who can no longer safely live independently. For these and countless other situations, Genacross is there sharing compassion and caring when it is needed most.



“Lives are touched and changed forever through the work of Genacross ministries,” says Marshall.

“Our employees, volunteers, donors, and local churches work together every day, making a difference by showing radical, unconditional love to all we serve.”

For more information on how to volunteer or donate to the ministries of Genacross Lutheran Services, contact Mike George, Executive Director of the Genacross Lutheran Services Foundation, at MiGeorge@Genacross.org or 419-861-4964.



LUTHER HOME OF MERCY

At LUTHER HOME OF MERCY, radical love is expressed each day in so many meaningful ways. Founded 95 years ago by a pastor and his friends in the Northwestern Ohio Synod, the ministry is dedicated to helping people with intellectual and developmental disabilities live full and enriched lives. Today, LHM operates one of the largest intermediate care facilities in Ohio, 19 community homes, and provides day services throughout the Greater Toledo Area.



And while the buildings and programs of LUTHER HOME OF MERCY are amazing, what truly makes an impact in the lives of others, is the love that is expressed throughout the ministry. This love looks like staff members like Robert, who makes it his personal business to make sure that everyone has their favorite snacks. When you are with Robert, he will be sure to greet you with, “welcome home.” Robert sees those he cares for as an extension of family and celebrates their joys, their worries when sick, and helps people each day to be met with excitement and purpose.

There are many people like Robert who love and serve the residents of LUTHER HOME OF MERCY. Some work alongside those who are served every day, some connect with the residents during special events or Bible studies on campus, and some connect with residents out in the community. Some give their time to our ministry by volunteering for events, some give their money to support LUTHER HOME OF MERCY programs and services, and some donate personal care items and crafts to help support the many people impacted by the organization. The staff and care team of LUTHER HOME OF MERCY look forward to working alongside friends throughout in the Northwestern Ohio Synod to express radical love by continuing to enrich the lives and individual abilities of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Want to learn more about Luther Home of Mercy? Connect with us at lutherhome.org or contact Melissa Gregg: 419-836-7741, mgregg@lutherhome.org.



ON THE WAY TOGETHER

**“I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy
in every one of my prayers for all of you,”**

Philippians 1:3-4



As we, on the synod staff, reflect on this journey we are taking together, we are amazed to see where the Spirit is meeting us on the way in the Northwestern Ohio Synod. The faithful ministry, in this collection of stories and far beyond, is made possible by the grace of God as well as your steadfast faithfulness and willingness to answer God's call. And for that we give thanks!

We give thanks to God...

For the ways that you live out and share bold hope for the future of the church.

For your expansive curiosity that leads to new and different ministries.

For the authentic communities you nurture and nourish.

For the radical love you show to all of God's beloved people.

We cannot do this work alone.

God sends us out together to share the Good News and be the light of Christ for all people. As we continue on the way, we look forward to the ways we can learn and grow and walk together, for the renewal of northwest Ohio and the world.

