

2022
REPORT
TO
THE
SYNOD

SOUTHERN OHIO
SYNOD, ELCA

*Stronger and Better Together ... Joining Jesus
in the Restoration of the World*

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#SOSynodELCA



BISHOP'S REPORT

BP. SUZANNE DARCY DILLAHUNT

*For where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there among them.
(Matthew 18:20, NRSV)*

Grace and peace be with you in the name of Jesus
Christ our risen Savior.

There will be more than two or three of us gathering as
we prepare to welcome about 1200 people to the
Southern Ohio Synod.



This year, we are not having a Synod Assembly because the [ELCA Churchwide Assembly](#) is coming to Columbus on August 8-12. Under the theme “Embody the Word” we are excited to welcome all of the voting members, guests, visitors, volunteers, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, Secretary Sue Rothmeyer, Interim Vice President Carlos Peña, Treasurer Lori Fedyk, and a whole bunch of others as we gather for worship, business and fellowship (as much as we can with COVID precautions) at the Columbus Convention Center.

If you have not signed up to be a volunteer...it's not too late. It will cost you \$15 to park, so why not carpool with some of your friends and spend a day or two with us? Please [click this link](#) to apply to be a volunteer. If you cannot join us, please pray for the Assembly and watch it on Live Stream. As we receive more information, we will pass it along.



BISHOP'S REPORT

BP. SUZANNE DARCY DILLAHUNT

Since we last met at the 2021 SOS Assembly, Synod and Congregational ministries have taken on new energy and shapes that prior to the COVID-19 pandemic might not have been imagined. Lots of potential and opportunities have come to life. We know that digital ministry is here to stay and continues to evolve. We continue to reach more people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We all continue to learn and work differently. We acknowledge grief and loss and we know that we aren't alone. Are people tired, yes! Are rostered leaders tired, yes! Is our world tired, yes! AND yet, God continues showing up in places we might not have imagined. Jesus reminds us that where 2 or 3 are gathered in Jesus' name, Jesus is there among them!

You have gathered together in-person and online and amazing ministry is happening. THANK YOU! Thank you for giving faithfully in offerings to your congregations. Keep it up even in this time of inflation. And because of the faithfulness of all of you, we were able to exceed Mission Support giving to the ELCA and ended the fiscal year in the black. THANK YOU! I commend to you the SOS 2021-22 Audit Report. It is [linked here](#).

Thank you congregations for generosity giving Mission Support to this Synod. [Click here](#) to view the complete list of Congregational giving to the Southern Ohio Synod.

At the SOS Assembly last year, we passed a 2 year Mission and Ministry Plan (Budget) which is always challenging. I have every confidence that we can meet this Challenge. [Click here](#) to review the 2022-23 Mission and Ministry Plan.



God continues showing up in places we might not have imagined. Jesus reminds us that where 2 or 3 are gathered in Jesus' name, Jesus is there among them!



STEWARDSHIP TEAM & STEWARDSHIP FOR ALL SEASONS

Stewardship is a lifelong adventure and this year's Southern Ohio Synod Theme is: **Let Your Light Shine!**

The **Stewardship Team** is grateful for your generous support of the work we do together as a synod through congregational mission support. They are especially delighted to announce that, for the first time in many years, we *exceeded* the goal set for congregational mission support in the Southern Ohio Synod's 2021-22 Mission and Ministry Plan, even as you continue to do amazing ministry in your own communities and around the world! Over this next year, the Stewardship Team wants to celebrate the

many ways in which our congregations--and all of us together as the Southern Ohio Synod—"Let Your Light Shine!" Please watch for announcements for how your congregations and ministries can participate in this in the weekly Synod email.

... for the first time in many years, we EXCEEDED the goal set for congregational mission support in the Southern Ohio Synod's 2021-2022 Mission & Ministry Plan.

Stewardship for All Seasons is the Southern Ohio Synod's initiative to help congregations develop the strong foundational stewardship that underlies mission and ministry. Through the Thrive! Campaign and our partnership with GSB Fundraising, we are able to offer this two-year program at a reduced cost to congregations for training in financial stewardship, leadership development, and the faithful stewardship of the varied blessings which God gives us for ministry. Our congregations have found this an incredibly worthwhile investment, and the recent addition of specialized training tracks on a variety of topics makes this an even more valuable program! For more information about Stewardship for All Seasons, please contact [Pastor Katie Kerrigan](#).



CONGREGATIONAL VACANCIES

Of the 179 congregations and ministries in the Southern Ohio Mission Territory, there are **10 full-time vacancies**:

- 8 are senior/solo pastor positions
- 2 are associate pastor positions

There are **4 part-time vacancies**, all of which are for solo pastors.

This means that of our congregations, 5% are vacant with full-time calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and 2% are vacant with part-time calls, for a total vacancy rate of 7% in congregations which are able to call a full or part-time. Compared to our sisters and brothers in other synods, Southern Ohio continues to remain on the lower end of the spectrum of vacancy rates in the region and in the ELCA.

The landscape of the call process across the ELCA remains challenging at this time. For full-time calls, we are seeing very few pastors who are open to leaving their current calls, and this means that our call committees are seeing fewer pastors to interview. It is even more challenging to find part-time pastors to serve. In response to this, the Southern Ohio Synod is encouraging conversation with nearby ELCA or ecumenical congregations for possible partnership in calling a pastor as well as lifting up the [Leadership Academy](#) for the training of a Synod Authorized Minister (SAM) to serve.

Please join us in continuing to encourage those with the gifts for ministry to consider the possibility of the Spirit's calling to ordained ministry, and join us in our prayer that God will continue raise up leaders across this church to serve God's people.

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COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

The Synod Council passed the Compensation Guidelines for Rostered Ministers for 2023 and they are posted on the Synod Website under Congregations and Rostered Ministers and are [linked here](#).



2021 VIRTUAL SYNOD ASSEMBLY MINUTES

The Synod Council also passed the 2021 Synod Assembly Minutes. If you'd like to review them, you can [find them here](#).



THRIVE! MISSION CAMPAIGN

19 congregations have completed Thrive! campaigns or are in process of holding campaigns. 2 other congregations designated a percentage of their capital campaigns for Thrive!

Total pledged: \$436,866

Total received: \$270,911

61 individuals made personal commitments outside of Thrive! campaigns.

Total pledged: \$3,677

Total received: \$69,915



THRIVE! MISSION CAMPAIGN

23 congregations are giving special gifts outside of Thrive! campaigns, 2 of which also held Thrive! campaigns.

Total pledged: \$102,809

Total received: \$92,810

Additional income resulted from Synod Council designations (e.g., property sales).

Total received: \$100,463

Other miscellaneous income has also been realized from such things as T-shirt sales at the 2019 Southern Ohio Synod Assembly and gifts from Lutheran Men in Mission (LMM) and Women of the ELCA.

Total received: \$2,705

Grand total pledged: \$826,520

Grand total received: \$636,955

COVID-19 continues to hamper the holding of campaigns. Yet, progress is being made. The following congregations are scheduled to hold campaigns this winter/spring:

Peace, Arnheim

Christ, Athens

Trinity, Pittsburg

Christ, Heath

Holy Trinity, Newark

St. Paul's, Newark

We anticipate another 20-30 congregations will opt to move forward as the pandemic abates, and we continue to be a synod that is Stronger and Better Together ... Joining Jesus in the Restoration of the World.



**Grand Total Pledged:
\$826,520**

**Grand Total Received:
\$636,955**



YOUTH & FAMILY

Youth and Family Ministry in the Southern Ohio Synod has a four-legged approach to ministry.

1. **Safeguarding.** In Ohio, the State Attorney General's Office requires churches to have a Best Practices Safeguarding System regarding minors in place. Gary Pecuch spends a good deal of time helping congregations to develop or update their safeguarding systems.
2. **Outcome-based Ministry.** Gary visits congregations to help re-vision and develop a long-term strategic plan for equipping children and youth with the necessary faith assets to live out their personal calling in life.
3. **Immersing Children and Youth in the Life and Mission of the Church.** The Synod values immersing children and youth (and families) in the church through active participation. The hope is that churches will have a healthy balance of age-based programming and interest-based ministry.
4. **Resources.** Gary is here to help congregations find the resources necessary to aid in ministry to young people.



COMMUNITY SANDBOX

We just completed our first year of implementation of the Synod resource site called the "[Community Sandbox](#)". Its purpose is to gather in one place home grown resources from our member churches. We invite all members of Southern Ohio Synod congregations and ministries to add resources that they have created to be shared with the wider church. At present, there are over 180 users of the site and it contains over 180 resources. Topics are fairly wide spread from Church Seasons to Bible Studies, Devotionals, to Faith Discussions to VBS resources, to Stewardship, Worship and Digital Ministry and more. You will need to create a free account to access these resources and to upload your own. Contact [Gary Pecuch](#) for more information.



CULTIVATE

Cultivate is the synod's initiative to encourage and resource emerging Lutheran worshipping communities in the Southern Ohio Synod. The Cultivate Team is delighted to announce the first three recipients of Cultivate microgrants for emerging Lutheran worshipping communities:

1. Gather Cincinnati for its ministry to young adults in the Cincinnati area
2. Fresh Start at Trinity Episcopal Church in Troy
3. La Palabra, an outreach ministry to Latinx families in the Dayton area.

Through our partnership with the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church, we are able to offer excellent training and mentoring to both lay leaders and rostered ministers who are dreaming of new ways to draw new people into relationship with Jesus.



THE COLLABORATIVE

The Collaborative is the synod's initiative to help congregations find new life in partnering with God in God's mission in their communities. This program of training and accompaniment is built upon the conviction that communities of faith find life and purpose in renewed relationship with God, with one another, and with the communities God sends us to serve. In the Collaborative, congregations learn together how to pursue this renewal in their own contexts.



THE VIBRANT CHURCH CONFERENCE

The Vibrant Church Conference is the synod's investment in encouraging lay folks in their ministries through a monthly online workshop series on a wide variety of topics. As we prepare to emerge from the pandemic, the Vibrant Church Conference Team is considering new ways of achieving this same purpose. Stay tuned!



OUTSIDE THE BOX TEAM

Outside the Box (OTB) was formed in late 2020, to assist congregations in their adoption of technologies that would enable them to record or to live stream services. During 2021, OTB conducted a few dozen mentoring sessions and issued ELCA sponsored grants to synod congregations. At the conclusion of 2021, OTB shifted its focus to assist the Synod office with a vision for the future.

Over the last six months, OTB has spent time analyzing the elements that have led to sustained and explosive growth in non-denominational mega churches. This analysis has revealed three themes that will shape the vision for Southern Ohio Synod into the future:

Exceptional Worship Experience

Growing churches provide their congregations with rich, deep experience in-person and online. Music, witness and preaching are oriented to the strengths and needs of a given population. These churches use this experience to tap into each person's desire to build a deeper emotional connection with God and with other parishioners.



OUTSIDE THE BOX TEAM

Explicit Intent to Connect

Growing churches ensure that their visitors and parishioners are immediately connected to opportunities for a broader experience. Connections include opportunities to engage in study, to connect with others in a similar stage or walk of life, and to plug into social activities. In particular, these churches find creative ways to connect everyone to areas where they can serve the broader community. The pandemic took away many of the opportunities for individuals to volunteer. This connection to service taps into an unmet need.

Commitment to Planting

Growing churches consistently look for where they will plant the next church. Goals are set around building capital to support the creation of satellite and new plant locations. As these locations are established, these churches focus on enabling those groups to connect back to the broader community and on equipping them to provide exceptional worship experience.

As we move through the remainder of 2022 and into 2023, OTB is working to factor these themes into the vision we have for Southern Ohio and into the day-to-day operations of the Synod office. We are incredibly excited for what the future has to offer.



LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

“...sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked by the cross of Christ forever.”

These words underscore our common baptismal calling to live out the Gospel in our daily lives. For some, the calling of the Spirit lifts up lay leaders to serve in public ministry as Synod Authorized Ministers (SAMs) or Lay Worship Leaders (LWLs).

Thrive Goal #2 (Raising up Leaders for Smaller Congregations) makes possible the Leadership Academy of the Southern Ohio Synod, which serves as the training ground for the education and formation of these leaders. In the wake of Dr. Cory Driver's departure last fall, Dr. Lynn Nakamura was named the Director of the Academy. She and Dr. Wray Bryant have worked diligently to revamp the curriculum in light of its new administrative structure.

We are excited to announce that these 1 and 2 year programs are being staffed in 2022-23 by the following instructors:

Pastor Kristin Santiago
Pastor Julie Hutson
Bishop Suzanne Darcy Dillahunt
Pastor Bob Abrams
Dr. Hank Langknecht
Dr. Wray Bryant
Dr. Anders Tune
Pastor Steve Kimm
Dr. Lynn Nakamura

We are grateful to them for sharing their gifts and experience.

Currently, we have 5 people who are nearing the point of readiness to begin serving as LWLs and 4 who are beginning their second year in the SAM training, and we are building a new cohort of people to begin studies in June.



CONGREGATIONAL ANNIVERSARIES

It is always a joy to celebrate milestones. We lift up in prayer all those celebrating significant anniversaries as Congregations, Pastors and Deacons. ALL Certificates will be sent later in June to Rostered Ministers and Congregations who celebrate in 2022. They will be recognized at the 2023 Southern Ohio Synod Assembly.

Join me in praying for and celebrating with these Congregations:

175 Years

St. Matthew Lutheran Church
Arcanum, OH

150 Years

St. Peter Lutheran Church
New Lebanon, OH

125 Years

Trinity Lutheran Church
Bridgeport, OH

St. Paul Lutheran Church
Lynchburg, OH

100 Years

Clinton Heights Lutheran Church
Columbus, OH

Thanks be to God for the Mission and Ministry of these Congregations ... and many more!



ROSTERED MINISTER ANNIVERSARIES

It is always a joy to celebrate milestones. We lift up in prayer all those celebrating significant anniversaries as Congregations, Pastors and Deacons. ALL Certificates will be sent later in June to Rostered Ministers and Congregations who celebrate in 2022. They will be recognized at the 2023 Southern Ohio Synod Assembly.

Join me in praying for and celebrating these Rostered Ministers of Word and Sacrament:

25 Years

Betsy M. Williams
Bonnie L. Gerber
David J. Eidson
Henry E. Zorn
Jonathan L. Eilert
Martin P. Gehring

40 Years

Brian K. Nunnally
Dale L. Schaefer
James V. Bosse
Jeffrey P. Wick
Robert W. Ahern, Jr.
Steven J. Gellatly

50 Years

Carl A. Adler
Gordon S. Huffman, Jr.
Timothy R. Swanson

55 Years

Albert R. Laese
David K. Schroeder
Donald L. Hare
Lawrence H. Myers
Merlyn E. Seitz
Robert J. Heinlein
Stephen J. Foster

60 Years

Andrew W. Wilch, Jr.
Brian L. Matevia
David W. Markowich
Donald H. Moeser
Glen H. Gronlund
John L. Johansen
Richard D. Match

65 Years

George A. Hartman
Robert W. Kelley
Rudolph S. Kolberg

Join me in praying for and celebrating these Rostered Ministers of Word and Service:

25 Years

Linda L. Cole

*Thanks be to God for these faithful
servants of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!*



WHAT IS COMING NEXT?

In October, we anticipate a Synod-wide Worship Event for us to gather in praise and thanksgiving. As soon as we have a date and location we will let you know. It will be good to be together.

We will have a Synod Assembly in 2023. It is my hope that it will be a one day gathering.

Pray for Synod Council as they continue doing the work they are called to do, on your behalf, between Synod Assemblies. I ask for continued prayers for the Synod Staff Team as we walk with you in mission and ministry.

In particular, we give thanks to Deacon Cory Driver, Director of the Leadership Academy, and Deacon Dan Jacob, Media Ambassador and Storyteller in their service to our Synod. They concluded their time in these roles since our 2022 SOS Assembly.

We welcome Pastor Karl Biermann as our Regional Gift Planner, whom we share with the Indiana-Kentucky Synod through our partnership with the ELCA Foundation. And, we also welcome Pastor Rebecca Grate as our Media Ambassador and Storyteller.

Our Synod Council and Staff are faithful and committed people.

Again, thank you all for what you do as individuals and as congregations and ministries in your communities of faith where the Gospel continues to be shared and where you live your faith in action. Keep it up, even as you are tired and excited at the same time, and remember that where two or three are gathered...God is present.

Thank you, Deacon Cory Driver and Deacon Dan Jacob!

Welcome Pastor Karl Biermann and Pastor Rebecca Grate!