

# 2018 Sierra Pacific Synod Assembly Report of the Bishop

## *“We Are Church Together: This is Our Neighborhood”*

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.”*

*- Luke 10:27*

*Dear friends and members of the congregations and ministries of our Sierra Pacific Synod:  
Grace and Peace to you from Jesus who is the Christ, Amen.*

Over and over in the Bible, and particularly in the Gospels, the word “neighbor” is used to describe those to whom we are called to offer our love and care. Most often, these neighbors are not the first or the easiest people we might imagine offering our support to or choosing to be with in community. Samaritans, aliens, widows and orphans, lepers, tax collectors, and a variety of sinners are lifted up as the very people we are supposed to love in the same way we love ourselves and God – with all our heart and soul and strength and mind. I suppose this reminder comes to us in three of the four Gospels because God knows us all too well. God knows how we are more likely to love those whom it is easy for us to love, those who seem most like us, or for those from whom we might expect to get something in return for our love.

This call from the Gospel to love our neighbor also speaks to a part of our sinful nature – our proclivity to exclude others -- those whom we fear or who are different from us. There is ample evidence throughout history and, yes, in this time, of those who seek to play off our fear of the “other” – xenophobia – for political or monetary gain. We are encouraged not to see others as our neighbors, but as those whom we should fear, or exploit for our personal gain. We are given permission to ignore the suffering of many in our neighborhoods who live in fear because of the color of their skin. We choose not to see they are far more likely to die from being killed by a police officer, or to be picked up by immigration agents while dropping their children off at school.

We are told we should fear people fleeing from wars or political persecution or gang violence or who seek a better life who seek asylum at our borders and on our shores. As long as we have food and shelter, we ignore the millions who live without adequate shelter, or food, or potable water, or who are climate refugees. Our life of comfort and ease is often directly related to the lives of others who suffer. What is the work of the church for a time such as this? I pray our time in Assembly as “church together” (and beyond these three days) will be an opportunity for us to explore what it means for us to be “neighbor” to those in our local and global neighborhood.

My first understanding of “our neighborhood” came from living at 306 Barbara Avenue in Solana Beach, then a small, idyllic coastal town of 3,000 people just north of San Diego. Because we moved there when I was three years old, this is really the first place I knew as home. Growing up in that neighborhood helped me appreciate what security, happiness, beauty, friendships, comfort, and hope would mean to me in my youth. It was the neighborhood where my school was located, where my friends lived, where I first learned to ride a bike, where my brother and I sold avocados and lemonade from the trees of our yard.

It was an idyllic time when, even as a five-year-old, I was allowed to walk alone to the Speedee Mart. I would use the proceeds of our Avocado sales to get an Isee or to go to the beach with my brother to spend summer days under the watchful eyes of the lifeguards who knew all of the kids of our neighborhood by name. That meant, of course, we had to be on our best behavior at the beach. If we did anything wrong, it would inevitably get back to our parents. But even this network of watchful eyes provided me with a comfort and security which I was not able to appreciate at the time. Truth be told, I wouldn't mind having such a network of watchful eyes in place for our eight grandchildren in the communities in which they live, because this is a very different day and age. I wonder, what is the role of the church in providing this “safety net” for ALL

of the children who live in our neighborhoods?

My formative years were also a time when our neighbors across the street built a bomb shelter, when we had regular “duck and cover” nuclear attack drills in school, and when Atlas missile launches from Vandenburg Air Force Base would sometimes light up our evening sky. New people moved into our neighborhood as friends moved away, and the “rules” for how my brother and I could roam freely began to change. As I grew older, I began to get a sense from my parents that “our” neighborhood and “our” nation felt less secure. In some ways, that brought about a protective response to try and keep our neighborhood as safe as it had been perceived to be. In other words, mostly white, middle class, and with people of similar political leanings to those of my parents.

The lessons I learned from those changing times that defined “our neighborhood” have taken some time to unlearn. In many ways, I am still unlearning them. I don’t believe I’m alone on this journey; perhaps you have been on a similar journey if you are of a similar “vintage” to me. Acknowledging how White Privilege, racism, sexism and gender bias, economic injustice, the Doctrine of Discovery, abuse of the environment and the impoverishment of most of the people and lands of the Third World that provided for the ease and comfort of my idyllic upbringing has been a long, painful process. I confess there are times when confronting my complicity in the sufferings of others has seemed so overwhelming that I wished I could simply retreat back into that neighborhood of my youth and pretend I don’t know what I now know.

But denial only deepens my guilt and my complicity and does nothing to address the very real concerns confronting the people of neighborhoods in our country and world *today*. Our calling as followers of Jesus is to name and confront the sin of our own complicity in the suffering of many in today’s world. It must be named. It must be courageously and faithfully transformed into active engagement with the powers of this world that attempt to seduce us with assurances that are nothing more than “false security and illusory hope.”<sup>1</sup> We have allowed ourselves to be seduced by assurances that wealth and power will provide security and happiness, even if our gains come at a cost that is life-threatening to most of the rest of the world. We are beguiled to believe the false security of building walls at our borders will keep us safe. We are enticed to an illusory hope that resorting to violence and war will somehow bring about peace.

Do we trust the redeeming love of Jesus will transform our hearts and minds and souls and strength to be church together and serve as we have been called to serve – to truly love God and others as we love ourselves? Christ’s words, “You shall love” declare not only a command, but a future reality we are called to fulfill. That time is now. For such a time as this we are called to be church together for the sake of the world. We are called to look faithfully and fearlessly at the needs of those around us. With the encouragement of the Spirit of Christ, we are called to imagine with boldness a response that demonstrates how God’s love in Christ shines even more brightly in the darkest and most fearful of times. This is what it means to love our neighbor as ourselves.

As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, we often speak of doing God’s work with our hands. Every three years, high school youth from all over the country gather in places like New Orleans, or Detroit, or Houston (where about 250 of our synod’s youth and their adult sponsors will be in June) to go to work in the neighborhoods of the cities where we are gathered. Many of our congregations offer the chance for their youth to go on “urban plunge” trips in our cities or to build houses in Mexico or other places. These experiences are transformative for our youth. Perhaps your life was transformed by attending a youth gathering or an urban immersion experience in your formative years. Mine was. But it’s not only youth and young adults whose lives are changed through such service. It’s all of us! In September of each year, on “God’s Work, Our Hands” weekend ([God’s Work Our Hands Resources](#)), we call youth and adults in our congregations and ministries to consider how they will immerse themselves in the communities they serve through work projects and acts of charity.

In some places, these experiences have prompted ongoing connections and relationships between congregational members and the people of the neighborhoods where many of our congregations have been offering a witness to Christ for 50, 60, 70 years or more. Sometimes, these are the first substantive con-

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<sup>1</sup> From the Rite of Ordination - charge to the newly ordained.

nections that have been made between congregations and neighborhoods in many years. Neighborhoods which have changed much in these years. Neighborhoods that are in many cases much more diverse in their makeup than our congregations. Neighborhoods with youth and young adults and people who could add much to the depth and strength of our witness and service. Can we, will we, change our willingness and ability to see people we have overlooked or seldom noticed? Can we, will we offer an open door, a “welcome mat” to our neighbors that is more than offering service one weekend per year to the people Jesus described in Matthew 25 as those in whom we are called to see the very presence of Christ? People Jesus calls us to love in the same way we are called to love God – with all our heart and our soul and our strength.

In the backdrop of all these questions about our work and witness, a good number of of our 192 congregations in northern Nevada and northern California are facing serious questions about the sustainability of their ministries. As our synod staff have visited with you, we have heard your concerns and your hopes for the future of the ministries you have loved and served for many years. In the last 40 years or so, most of our congregations have become smaller and older, with fewer resources of people and money and time to offer programs and ministries that were once a part of a vital witness that drew people into a walk with Christ. Some of our congregations are no longer able to support the full-time call of a pastor to serve with them. During this same period, we have become what the Pew Research Group calls “The Whitest denomination in America.” I don’t believe these two trends are unrelated.

I believe the decline of our denomination is due largely to our lack of agility to reflect the diversity of the amazing mission field – our neighborhood -- where God has placed us. I also believe our calling now is to trust that God trusts us with this great challenge – to overcome our fears and our failings to be the present and future fulfillment of Christ’s command to us – “love your neighbor as yourself.” Institutional racism and a lack of cultural competence and humility have been tantamount to putting out an “unwelcome mat” by the door of our sanctuaries. Sanctuaries where people are longing to experience Christ’s welcoming embrace, an embrace that we are called to offer. No easy work, this, but then, nothing worth doing is ever easy.

Quite honestly, this hard work may be a way for us to finally admit that without the transforming love of Christ, we cannot do this ourselves. We need the Spirit’s nudge, empowerment, gifts and graces to do the hard work of seeing our neighbors and neighborhoods as Christ sees all of us – in love and mercy and grace. It reminds me of the words of the Hymn “Spirit of Gentleness:”

*Spirit, spirit of gentleness.  
Blow through the wilderness, calling and free.  
Spirit, spirit of restlessness. Stir me from placidness.  
Wind, wind on the sea.  
You call from tomorrow. You break ancient schemes,  
From the bondage of sorrow The captives dream dreams;  
Our women see visions, Our men clear their eyes.  
With bold new decisions Your people arise.*

Recently, I heard Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda of Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary speak to the Rocky Mountain Synod as they gathered in Assembly. At one point during her talk on the theme “For the Life of the World,” she asked this question: “What if being a neighbor means taking a stand? To advocate, to seek justice and peace – even if it means we are being called into controversy?”<sup>2</sup> It’s a similar question I have been wrestling with in my call to serve you, even before I was elected ten years ago to serve as your bishop. I have sometimes been asked what I would do to help congregations that are “dying.” My response has been this:

*“If you’re asking me to “fix” these congregations, that’s not our polity or practice – the Lutheran Church doesn’t invest bishops with that kind of authority. But what I can do is to encourage you to go out into your neighborhood and community, to seek out people and leaders of the community you serve and ask one question, “If you could tell a church to do*

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2 Keynote Address, Rocky Mountain Synod Assembly, May 4, 2018

*one thing that would make a difference in our community, what would it be?" Then, take all the answers you receive and pick the hardest one – because it's likely that's where the Holy Spirit is hiding, waiting to encourage you in this challenging work. Let it be known that you are a congregation that is willing to risk everything to love and serve your neighbors, or to die trying. That's a witness I'm thinking more people would want to know something about."*

I hope and pray we will continue to answer the call to be church together -- willing to risk our very existence for the sake of our neighbors, knowing that this might well stir up some controversy as we advocate for peace and justice in Christ's name. May the Spirit of the living Christ empower us to love, and be loved, by our neighbors.

Thank you for the privilege of serving with you as the bishop of our Sierra Pacific Synod. Blessings in your lives and ministries!

Peace,  
Bp. Mark

## 2018 Report of the Vice President

Welcome to the 31st Annual Synod Assembly of the Sierra Pacific Synod ELCA. I submit this report to the voting members of the Synod Assembly as well as to the members of congregations throughout the Synod. As your Vice President, I am pleased to share some of the work and achievements of the Synod Council and Officers from the past year. As an expression of being Church Together, the Synod Council has worked diligently to address the needs of our congregations, our ministry partners, our communities, our inter-faith partners, and our role in the national Church. I'd like to share a passage from the letter of Paul to the Churches of Galatia.

*Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

*Galatians 6: 9-10*

The Synod Council experienced a change of representatives due to the change in our Conference system. Each Conference now has an elected member of Council at all times. We have learned new ways of working together. We have addressed challenges with honesty, thoughtfulness, and good spirits. We have prayed with one another and have witnessed God's work around us and among us. Two Council members will be leaving Council this year. Pr. Gregg Brown has completed his term as an at-large member and we thank him for his faithful service. Pr. Tita Valeriano has resigned from the Council and become our new Director of Evangelical Mission. Thanks be to God! We pray for her in her new call and for the exuberant voice she will bring to our Synod's shepherding of new start and re-start congregations. Many thanks to Pr. Gregg and Pr. Tita for their unwavering commitment to enlightening our Council to the needs and voices of the many communities in our Synod. We wish them well in their ministries in the future and thank them for their willingness to serve.

This past year seemed to fly by with amazing opportunities to be a part of our Church Together. In October, the Synodical Vice Presidents met with the Council of Bishops in Chicago for a round of meetings, developing shared understandings, and worship. We celebrated the gifts of future Church leaders at the Fund for Leaders dinner. We pondered together the future directions of theological education and the configuration of our Lutheran seminaries system. We spent time with Churchwide leaders and staff, sharing stories of becoming more engaged in the communities that surround us. Bishop Elizabeth Eaton spoke to Bishops and Vice Presidents about the importance of leadership and congregational vitality. Back in our Synod's territory, I attended numerous events, classes, and concerts leading up to the commemoration of Reformation 500. We were extraordinarily blessed by the variety and availability of opportunities to learn and grow into our Lutheran heritage. Thank you to all planners, speakers, performers, preachers, and host congregations for making the Reformation season a time to remember!

In August, the university community of Charlottesville, VA, became an epicenter for conflicts and violence over racism and white supremacy. Protestors and counter-protestors clashed in the streets and in a local park. An organized group of clergy from many denominations sought to separate the two groups. When the state and local police were unable to control the conflict, the crowd was dispersed and in the ensuing moments, a young woman, a counter-protestor was killed. In November, I was able to meet with local clergy and peace movement leaders in Charlottesville. Bp. Mark and I created a project, the Charlottesville Listening Project, to help Charlottesville residents connect with Lutheran leaders from throughout the country. Much work is left to be done in healing the divide in Charlottesville and in our nation. In April, the ELCA, a member Church of the National Council of Churches, was one of the participants in "A.C.T. (awaken, confront, transform) to end Racism" activities in Washington, D.C. The main activities took place on the 50th anniversary of the death of the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The purpose of the event was to confront our national legacy of racism and to transform the hearts and minds of people and institutions through truth-telling strategies in church life. It was a wonderful series of events that enlivened the Spirit and captured the ongoing meaning of Dr. King's work and ministry.

The Synod Council meets at least four times a year, typically in June, September, January, March, and May. We serve as the Board of Directors for the Synod and hold the interim legislative authority between meetings of the Synod Assembly. One of our tasks is to recommend program goals and budgets to the Synod Assembly. We asked ourselves how the benevolence of the congregations and individuals of the Synod could be directed to support the mission and ministry of the Synod. We were very thankful for the work and deliberation of the Finance Committee. They helped the Council appreciate the challenges ahead in supporting all expressions of our being Church Together. We have made a budget recommendation that will need additional help from the Synod as a whole to make the funding streams fulfill ministry needs. The Council has also provided an income-neutral budget in accordance with an Assembly resolution.

The Synod Council depends heavily upon Synod staff to implement many of the decisions that we make throughout the year. The staff works tirelessly to keep all of our Synod's activities moving smoothly. We have had a new Director for Evangelical Mission, Pr. Tita Valeriano, join the staff of the Sacramento Office. She will work together with Pr. Ron Zoesch, Interim DEM, as they transition into her new role. Pr. Katy Grindberg and Pr. Kathryn Gulbranson continue to serve as Assistants to the Bishop and travel the many thousands of miles to meet the needs of congregations. Our office staff, Laurie Gaumer, Diana Suruki, Debbie Cook, Kathye Hamm, Rachel Line, and Sabrina Casillas keep the work flowing under new and challenging conditions. Our receptionist, Patty Monteiro, has moved on to a new position in the Sacramento area and we wish her Godspeed. Bp. Mark continues to log hundreds of miles every week on behalf of our Synod and he is now the most senior serving Bishop in our Region. Thanks be to God!

I want to thank the Synod Assembly Planning Team for the months of preparation that they have put into our time together. They make our time together, as Church Together, more meaningful and graceful in the thoughtfulness and hospitality that undergirds our experience. Thank you to our guest speakers, volunteers, Churchwide representative, and the Sacramento congregations. In closing, let me share a quote from Dr. King's, "Letter from Birmingham Jail". His words remain poignant and prophetic about our connections with each other and the neighborhoods where we reside.

***"Moreover, I am cognizant of the interrelatedness of all communities and states. I cannot sit idly by in Atlanta and not be concerned about what happens in Birmingham. Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."***

***Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Letter from Birmingham, 1963***

God keep you safely in your travels until we can be Church together,

Elaine H. Whitney  
Vice President  
Sierra Pacific Synod ELCA

# 2018 Report of the Secretary

## Actions of the Synod Council May 2017 – April 2018

The Sierra Pacific Synod Council met in May, June, and September of 2017 and in January and March of 2018. During the course of the year synod staff members, representatives of our ministry partners, representatives of the ELCA, discipling team chairs, and many others actively participated in meetings and made important contributions.

Members of the Synod Council during this year included: Bishop Mark Holmerud, Vice President Elaine Whitney, Treasurer Linda Lownes, Secretary Jeff Pennington, Sue Michaelsen (Conference 1 – Redwood Mountain), Carl Brodt (Conference 2 – Bridges), Pr. Jason Bense (Conference 3 – Capitol Valley), Linda Babcock (Conference 4 – Sierra Nevada Foothill), John Allured (Conference 5 – San Francisco Peninsula), Pr. Clark Brown (Conference 6 – El Camino Real), Sheela Boddu (Conference 7 – Mt. Diablo), Bill Turner (Conference 8 – Sierra Central Valley), Pr. Paul Clark (Conference 9 – Central San Joaquin Valley), Pr. Gregory Brown (At-Large), Gail Kiyomura (At-Large), Pr. Teresita “Tita” Valeriano (At-Large), and Nichola Hayes (Youth).

At the 2017 Synod Assembly, no lay female representative was elected from Conference 7 – Mt. Diablo. Following subsequent consultation with Pastor Ray Waespi, dean of Conference 7, Council received the name of Ms. Sheela Boddu as a nominee for the position. In June 2017, pursuant to Synod Constitution S10.01.03., Council elected Sheela to fill the position for the remainder of the three-year term.

At its June 23-24, 2017 meeting, the Synod Council elected Sue Michaelsen to the Executive Committee, joining Bishop Holmerud, Vice President Elaine Whitney, Treasurer Linda Lownes and Secretary Jeff Pennington, who serve ex officio as officers of the synod.

Following Pastor Tita Valeriano’s appointment in March 2018 as ELCA Domestic Mission Director for Evangelical Mission deployed to the Sierra Pacific Synod, Pastor Tita resigned her At-Large position on the Synod Council. Council will fill this position at a subsequent meeting of the council.

### **Roster:**

During the year, the Synod Council acted on the following roster issues:

- Approved On Leave from Call (new/renewed):  
The Rev. Diane Bowers; The Rev. Pamela Schaefer Dawson; The Rev. Doris Nolan; The Rev. Tuhi-na Rasche; The Rev. Krista T. Vingelis
- Called to Special Ministry:  
The Rev. David Bates for Specialized Ministry at Mark Kindred Hospice in Pleasant Hill, CA; The Rev Sarah Erickson as Co-Executive Director of Mt. Cross Ministries
- Called to Intentional Interim Ministry:  
The Rev. Tim Phillips
- Extended non-stipendiary call:  
The Rev. Sanna Reinholtzen, University Lutheran Chapel, Berkeley, CA; Suzanne O’Dea (Deacon), Calvary Lutheran Church, Eureka, CA
- Moved to Retired Roster:  
The Rev. Adisa Armand; The Rev. Steve Blair; The Rev. Deborah J. Butler; The Rev. Sandra D. Dager; The Rev. Karen Deutscher; The Rev. David Dykes; The Rev. Jean Lebbert; The Rev. Jo Ann Neal; The Rev. Harry Rod Platte; Marcelle Schaefer (Associate in Ministry); The Rev. Martha Neff Stum; The Rev. Linda Vogelgesang; The Rev. James Warnock

- Approval and Review of Letter of Invitation to Extended Service (for non-ELCA pastors serving ELCA congregations):

The Rev. Ed Hilton (PCUSA), Christ the King, Tahoe, CA; The Rev. Jerilyn Dahlke (PCUSA), as Pastor of Outreach and Administration, El Dorado Hills, CA; The Rev. Randy Knutson (Episcopal), Trinity, Fort Bragg, CA; The Rev. Diana Turner (Episcopal), Hope of the Sierra, South Lake Tahoe, CA; The Rev. Monique Ortiz (UCC), Santa Maria y Marta, San Francisco, CA; The Rev. Deborah Hubbard (PCUSA), Grace Good Shepherd, McKinleyville, CA

### **Constitutional Provisions:**

At its January 19-20, 2018 meeting, Council amended Continuing Resolution S10.01.A16. and approved Continuing Resolution S10.01.A18. to provide for the election of a Young Adult member to Synod Council.

At the same meeting, in response to a request from the Synod Assembly Planning Committee, Council voted to send proposed changes to Synod Bylaw S7.22.01. to the Synod Assembly for consideration.

The Synod Council approved Constitutional and By-Laws changes for the following congregations:

- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Reno, NV
- Trinity Lutheran Church, Pleasanton, CA

### **Examples of other actions:**

At its meeting on May 3, 2017, Council authorized a new worshipping community in the Gonzales/Soledad, California area, to be based out of Iglesia Luterana El Buen Pastor in Salinas.

Following consultations with Interim Director for Evangelical Mission Pastor Ron Zoesch, at its meeting on September 14, 2017, the Synod Council Executive Committee voted to sell the church property in Hilmar, CA—the former Berea Lutheran Church. At the same meeting, the Executive Committee voted to extend the current lease on the Burlingame, CA office of the bishop until January 2020.

At its meeting on September 22-23, 2017, Council voted its assent of the proposed merger of St. John Lutheran Church, Sunnyvale, CA with St. Luke Lutheran Church, Sunnyvale, CA. At the same meeting, Council voted to authorize “Farming Hope” as a synodically authorized worshipping community of the Sierra Pacific Synod and designated Jamie Stark as its servant leader.

The Synod Council approved the appointments of individuals to many other committees and boards, including the Candidacy Committee, Nominating Committee, Lutheran Social Services Board, Mt. Cross Board, and Elder Care Alliance Board, as well as approving changes to the constitutions and policies of some of these organizations.

Every effort is made to post the minutes of Synod Council meetings on the Synod’s website soon after they are approved at the next subsequent Council meeting.

In Christ,  
Jeff Pennington, Synod Secretary

## 2018 Report of the Treasurer

Most often I am asked to submit reports and speak about the synod finances in secular terms. I am asked about the audit report, assets, and cash flow. I understand that the balance sheets and cash flow reports are important, but it's important to get out of the business model and talk about how the synod's resources are used to further God's work in our synod, our country, and our world. Somehow finance committee discussions often move away from income and expenses and move to Chapter 6 of the synod constitution: Statement of Purpose — "The church is a people created by God in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, called and sent to bear witness to God's creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world." Section 6.03 then states the synod's responsibility for the oversight of the life and mission of this church, in partnership with the churchwide organization, within the synod's territory: caring for congregations, ordained ministers, and deacons; providing leadership; fostering organizations; planning for mission in the Synod; building, supporting, and maintaining relationships. Each month I update a report that details the Mission Support and designated gifts received in the synod office and each quarter I prepare and mail contribution statements to congregations. As I do these tasks, I thank God for each congregation and its pastor(s) and disciples.

I continue to hope that everyone attending the Assembly is familiar with "Stories of Faith in Action" and the stories that reflect how our offerings are used. When your congregation adopts its annual budget, your congregation designates a portion of the offerings received as Mission Support to fund the work of the Synod and the churchwide organization, as well as the work of the congregation. You may identify this as proportionate share or benevolence. When you look at the synod's operating budget, Line 1 shows the Mission Support revenue that the Synod received and expects to receive from the congregations. Line 11 shows what the Synod sent and expects to send to the ELCA each year. "Stories of Faith in Action" included the following equation:

MISSION SUPPORT = YOUR OFFERINGS AT WORK

The synod's fiscal year is February 1 - January 31, and in the fiscal year that ended on January 31, 2018, the Synod received \$1,810,247 in Mission Support and sent 36% of that amount (\$651,689) to the ELCA. Twenty congregations submitted 10% or more of the offerings received to the Synod as Mission Support. Bethlehem in Santa Rosa submitted 15% of its offerings. While Mission Support is generally calculated on regular offerings, congregations are encouraged to consider all of their revenue streams when calculating Mission Support. Within the Synod the monies were used to work with congregations and rostered leaders, support new and renewing congregations, and support the synod's ministry partners and sister synods: Lutheran Church of El Salvador, Lutheran Church of Rwanda, and Lutheran Church of Taiwan. The Mission Support dollars that were sent to the ELCA were used "to support congregations, to respond to local and worldwide ministry opportunities, engage in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, and lead churchwide initiatives on behalf of the whole ELCA."

The synod budget that is being presented to the Assembly details how the dollars received were spent during the last two fiscal years. It's important to note that the Synod Council has no authority to spend more than is in the approved budget but is required to develop a spending plan to reduce expenses when the revenue received is less than was budgeted. In addition to the budgeted items, the Synod receives designated gifts from congregations that are deposited into trust accounts and distributed monthly or quarterly to the synod's ministry partners, sister synods, and ELCA programs. During the 2017-18 fiscal year, the Synod received more than \$536,000 in designated gifts that were distributed to Ministry Partners and ELCA programs. The following were among the gifts received and distributed:

### Ministry Partners

• California Lutheran University	\$ 7,647
• Lutheran Campus Ministries	\$ 30,685
• Lutheran Social Services	\$ 37,171
• Mt. Cross	\$ 27,259

- Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary \$ 19,078
- San Francisco Night Ministry \$ 7,417

### **Sister Synods**

- El Salvador \$ 2,781
- Rwanda \$ 54,711

### **ELCA Programs**

- Global Church \$ 16,920
- Hunger and Poverty \$ 98,969
- Leadership \$ 1,600
- Where Needed Most \$ 151,060
- ELCA Disaster Response \$ 74,149
- Other \$ 10,736

This is only a partial list of the designated gifts that were received and distributed through the Synod. Congregations forwarded an additional \$1,467,659 directly to Churchwide rather than sending the funds through the Synod. Of the funds sent to the churchwide organization, \$1,064,995 was for programs within the Campaign for the ELCA. It's interesting to see that our congregations contribute more for specific ELCA programs than they provide in Mission Support to fund the synod's work.

### **New Start/Restart Grants**

\$149,000 was distributed from the Sierra Pacific Synod's Mission and Ministry Endowment Fund (formerly New and Renewing Fund and originally Outreach Fund) for the following missions, synodically authorized worshipping communities, and congregations:

- Christ Oromo Evangelical, San Lorenzo
- Gift of Grace, Fernley, NV
- Good Shepherd South Asian, Fremont
- Grace Lao, Richmond
- Lutheran Church of the Cross, Berkeley
- Miracles of Faith, Oakland
- Our Redeemer, Livingston
- Trinity, Fort Bragg
- Middle Circle, San Francisco

### **Warner Trust Grants**

\$10,400, the interest on the permanently restricted Warner Trust Account, was distributed to six congregations and one campus ministry site to assist with funding youth ministry activities.

### **Synod Properties**

The synod's assets included three churches and two parsonages from disbanded congregations. All properties were occupied during the 2017-18 fiscal year:

- Hilmar--church was rented to a Portuguese Congregation and Parsonage to a family
- Richmond--Grace Lao Lutheran Church occupied the property and parsonage

During February 2018, the Synod acquired the deed for the former Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Sanger, CA. The property currently is being appraised, and the Director of Evangelical Mission and Witness Discipling Team will be evaluating the property for its future use.

### **Financial Information**

The Synod has four separate funds:

- Operating Fund includes budgeted revenue receipts and expenses, as well as all designated trust accounts
- Property Management Fund is used to deposit property rents and pay property expenses

- Sierra Pacific Synod Mission and Ministry Endowment Fund--includes properties from disbanded congregations and investment accounts. This fund has up to an annual 5% spend rate on liquid assets to support the synod mission, congregations under development, revitalization of existing congregations, leadership development, and endowed positions.
- Warner Trust Fund has a permanently restricted corpus--the annual dividends on the investment are used to fund youth ministry grants

The comparison of the synod's finances as of January 31, 2017 and 2018 is in the Audit Report. The following compares the total assets in the funds between April 30, 2010 and April 30, 2018.

<b>Fund</b>	<b>April 30, 2010</b>	<b>April 30, 2018</b>
<b>Operating Fund</b>	\$ 632,669	\$ 312,661
<b>SPS Mission and Ministry Endowment Fund</b>	\$ 6,632,160	\$ 6,452,616
<b>Property Management Fund</b>	0	\$ 168,496
<b>Warner Trust Fund</b>	\$ 206,566	\$ 251,293
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 7,471,395</b>	<b>\$ 7,185,066</b>

Thank you to the members of the Finance Committee: John Kuehner, Lou Smith, John Valentine, and Carl Wilfrid.

Respectfully submitted,  
Linda Lownes, Treasurer