

Regional Core Team re Women in Ministry

May 23, 2019

Greetings,

We have a vision of a church identified by gender equity and equality, focused on all of God's people through Jesus Christ. Next year is the 50th anniversary of the ordination of women in the ELCA and predecessor bodies, yet women continue to describe experiences which show we have much work to be done.

Late last year, Region 9 received an ELCA *Holy Innovations Grant* in the amount of \$80,000 to transform the landscape for women leaders. A Regional Core Team has been assembled. Deacon Michelle Angalet, Vice President of Programs, Inspiritus, and Pastor Karen Boda, Faith, Clay, Alabama are members of that team.

Bishop Gordy and the other Region 9 bishops met in Puerto Rico on May 7 to affirm the initial work of this Core Team to strengthen our witness to Jesus Christ and create a more just and equitable church. Each of the bishops is unequivocally committed and engaged. Regional conversations and agreements have begun in the focus areas of Boundary Training, Candidacy, and the Call Process. On July 1, the Core Team will meet with the Region 9 bishops in Atlanta.

In 2020, there are plans to hold a gathering for the Region 9 rostered women to include shared learning, support, worship, and community building. This gathering will be the impetus for continued community, support, and learning. We pray that women will be renewed to serve their calls as places of vitality and mission.

An initial group of women from our synod gathered in Atlanta on May 7 to discuss their experiences as women in ministry. The room was filled with a shared sense of vision as well as the God-given energy and enthusiasm to move towards the vision. This was the first of many gatherings to listen and respond to the experiences of our women. We firmly believe that whole and healthy leaders, both men and women, will result in whole and healthy congregations who can witness to the creative and redeeming work of God.

Finally, as you heard during the 2018 Synod Assembly, there are pay differentials between men and women. This is a complex topic and requires understanding both compensation and context. The Synod Compensation Committee will begin to explore reasons for the differential, then consider ways to assist congregations in setting equitable compensation for all rostered leaders. This summer the Compensation Committee will begin to address the challenges inherent in the current matrix.

The Southeastern Synod is committed to working towards a more just and equitable church for all rostered leaders. We ask God's guidance and your prayers as we focus now on the women in our synod.

Many blessings,

Rev. Karen Boda, Pastor
Michelle Angalet, Deacon