

Report of Pastor Jill Henning – September 2019

Interim Liaison for Youth and Young Adult Ministry

First of all, let me begin by saying what an honor it has been to serve as the Interim Liaison for Youth and Young Adult Ministry. It was only possible by the commitment of countless volunteers across our four states to make ministry happen, as well as committed youth who have served our Synod on the Southeastern Synod Lutheran Youth Organization. Without the volunteers, both lay people and clergy, we would not be able to grow disciples in this synod quite as well.

Our Southeastern Synod Lutheran Youth Organization (SESLYO) attended Synod Assembly for the second year as voting members. They also brought forward a resolution on Mental Health Awareness, that the Assembly voted to approve. This resolution calls us as a Synod to provide a list of resources on the Synod website, as well as the Southeastern Synod's Youth Website (sesyouth.org), to assist those in our community to seek help when dealing with mental health issues. The hope of the resolution was that individual congregations would be able to link to the resources as well and assist congregations in caring for those facing a mental health struggle. The Synod Council is tasked with forming a taskforce to develop those resources in each state and national groups. During Assembly the SESLYO board lead a workshop on prayer that was very well attended. This Assembly was the end of two of our volunteers' terms on the SESLYO board. Pastor Kevin Martin and Sue Tyler have been amazing leaders to our youth for many years and we are so thankful for the ways that they have served.

Affirm 2019 was one of the larger Affirms we have had over the past 5 years. We had 302 youth and adults who attended the week long discipleship training at the University of West Alabama in June. This year we welcomed guests from our companion Synod in Bavaria with both youth and several adults attending the event. We also welcomed two pastors from Michigan, who came to be a part of our week to learn. I am happy to say the Affirmigan (Affirm + Michigan) had their first gathering in late July. This amazing ministry that has had decades of youth come through is now going to replicated in Michigan. They are beginning by offering day long retreats and are hoping to bring additional youth to our Affirm in 2020 to help build the tradition in their synod. Also coming to Affirm 2020 is Region 9's Bishop School. 2020 is the year that the Southeastern Synod hosts this weeklong event for youth who are nominated by their Bishop to attend. The event, itself, is in the midst of working on a new approach and the youth workers in Region 9 felt that hosting as a part of Affirm would allow for a year where the infrastructure was already in place, thus eliminating additional overhead costs for the event. Bishop School would function as an additional Unit for 10th through 12th graders but 3 participants from each synod in Region 9 would come. I have offered to coordinate this for Bishop Strickland, but he would serve as the primary instructor and I would work with him to develop the curriculum. This will allow Pastor Michael Janett to work with the administration team of Affirm.

SESLYO board met at the beginning of August to work on the 2019-2020 theme. The board picks the theme, and this is used for all our state events, the SESLYO Assembly and Affirm. The theme for this next year is: chosen. (the period is there on purpose) with the theme verse of John 15: 16-17 : **16** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that

will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. **17** This is my command: Love each other. I look forward to seeing how this is interpreted and how the youth develop this.

I am pleased to say that this year we have two Young Adults who are serving in the Young Adult in Global Mission (YAGM). Sarah Henning, a recent grad from the University of Georgia and a member of Community of Grace in Grayson, GA and Cassidy Drew, a recent grad from Roanoke College (ELCA) and member of Christ the King in Norcross, GA are both serving in YAGM in Mexico. Sarah will be working at a migrant shelter and Cassidy will be teaching at an Environmentally Sustainable School. As they post their blogs, we will link them through the Synod's enews so you can follow along on their adventure.

Finally, 7 youth from the Southeastern Synod and Pastor Tim Wrenn went to visit our companion synod, Iglesia Luterana Agustina de Guatemala (ILAG). While they were there, they participated in service projects, attended a youth ministry retreat, interacted with the young women attending the Milagro school and worship together with our brothers and sisters in Christ. I believe this is the first-time youth have represented the Southeastern Synod in Guatemala and I am so thankful for the leadership of Pastor Tim Wrenn for his guidance. Affirm 2019 raised \$1200 as an offering for this delegation to take to help support the important work that ILAG is doing educating young women through the Milagro School.

Upcoming Events for Youth and Young Adult Ministry:

All Tennessee: November 9-10 at Trinity Lutheran, Tullahoma Tennessee

All Georgia: February 21-23, 2020 at Camp Grace, Roberta, Georgia

SESLYO Assembly: March 20-22, 2020 at Lutheranch

Affirm: June 14-19, 2020 (staff arrive on June 12) University of West Alabama