

**Jessi Grieser**

**St. John's Lutheran Church, Knoxville, TN**

**Tell us a little about yourself and how you serve.**

I am the council president at St. John's Lutheran Church Knoxville, where I'm in my third year on the council. I also serve on the Diversity and Justice taskforce for the Southeastern Synod, and I'm taking what I hope will be a brief hiatus from my work on the council of Tyson House, the Episcopal/Lutheran Campus Ministry at the University of Tennessee. I am a PK (pastor's kid) who started doing "big church work" over twenty years ago when I worked on the evening dome event teams for the 2000 and 2003 ELCA youth gatherings--if you look closely, you'll see me on the old promo materials for the 2006 gathering!

I like to joke that in my spare time, when I'm not doing church work, I'm an assistant professor of English linguistics at the University of Tennessee.

**What is your favorite Bible verse and why?**

Philippians 4:7: *"May the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."* Part of that is probably because the pastor I grew up with, Ron Redder of the Southern Ohio Synod, always began and ended his sermons like they were additional letters from St. Paul (starting with Phillipians/Ephesians/Corinthians 1:2 "grace and peace to you..."), but I find it's a good reminder of where to set the compass, how to set the compass and why. The peace of God, be with you, and may it keep your heart and mind in Christ Jesus. In a busy world, I need that reminder often.

**When/how have you been blessed by God's abundance?**

I have been enjoying the many people my faith communities have introduced me to. I used the ELCA's zip code church finder to find St. John's Knoxville, and that led to discovering that lots of people I worked with at U Tennessee were Lutherans, and then to being very tightly tied in to my congregation, which led to being asked to join the council at Tyson House, and then the council at St. John's, and then to synod level work. At each place I keep meeting more and more wonderful, faith-filled people who enrich my life in so many ways. We have wonderful people in the southeastern synod such that it's a region I, as someone who considers myself an avowed northerner, now don't feel any desire to leave.