



As we gather virtually for this Synod Assembly under the theme Grace in a Digital Space, I am grateful for the ways God continues to gather, connect, teach, challenge, and send us.

Even here, across screens and miles, we are reminded that the church is not held together by geography alone. We are held together by Christ. Across conference lines and city streets, rural communities, and synod partnerships, Zoom rooms and council tables, grace keeps finding us, connecting us, and sending us into the world God so loves.

Much of my work this year has lived in the space between truth-telling and hope. Through Congregational Vitality, including Rural Revival, preaching, consultation, council and leadership support, vitality conversations, local mission-field engagement, and congregational discernment, I have had **139 opportunities for church visits** and congregational engagement across the synod.

Again and again, congregations have asked faithful questions and wondered together about their neighbors, hospitality, leadership, stewardship and generosity, buildings, partnerships, community engagement, and future possibilities. These are not simply practical questions. They are questions of faith, questions about who we are, whose we are, and how Christ is calling us to love and serve the communities right outside our doors.

This work has also included **2 Holy Closures**. Everything has a season, and this includes ministry. Helping congregations finish faithfully with prayer, dignity, gratitude, and care matters too.

Congregational vitality is also leadership development. The future of the church is not only shaped by strategic planning, programs, or buildings, but by the people following God's plan for that place. This year, through my prayer list and my calendar, I tracked **296 one-on-one conversations** with leaders across the synod. What an incredible number to see. Behind that number are prayers, concerns, discernment, listening, wondering together, problem-solving, connecting people with resources, and building relationships. This has been one of the great gifts of the past year, the sacred work of walking alongside leaders as they seek faithful next steps for the sake of the gospel. Again and again, I have been reminded that this is how Jesus so often meets people, in conversation, on the road, around tables, in moments of uncertainty, and with the Word that calls us forward.

That same leadership development also took shape through conversations with **52 council presidents** and **21 board or council conversations**. In those spaces, leaders named real concerns about sustainability, staffing, conflict, worship, mission, finances, and future direction. They also named hope. Again and again, I saw leaders who love their congregations deeply, who are trying to lead faithfully in complicated times, and who are willing to ask what God may be inviting them to do next.

Strengthening our **mission development team of 4** and supporting the unique realities of specialized ministry and the mission developments they are leading is also a part of my call. From White Earth to Peoples Church, A Community Called Grace to The Way, Creator God is up to new and exciting things. As leadership shifted this year, we are experiencing the gifts and complexities of bi-vocational leadership, new leaders joining the work, and the need for flexible, creative accompaniment.

This work has also stretched beyond our synod. Through more than **40 conversations with our global companions**, the Andhra Evangelical Lutheran Church in India, I have been reminded again that leadership development is never only local. It is relational, prayerful, and deeply connected to the wider body of Christ. Across distance, language, culture, and context, we continue to learn from one another what it means to be church together.

That larger mission is also carried through the shared ministry of committees, teams, partnerships, and congregations across the synod. This year, we have seen faithful work in stewardship and generosity, hunger ministry, public witness, creation care, racial equity, right relationship, and healthy boundaries. Each of these areas helps form the church for faithful witness in the world God so loves.

Another part of my call also includes administrative leadership and **supervision of 3 support staff**. This year has included walking with staff through transition, strengthening communication and internal systems, supporting mission support tracking and reporting, clarifying processes, and helping ensure that the daily work of the synod office serves the larger mission of the church. Administration is not separate from ministry. When done with care, clarity, and accountability, it helps create the conditions for congregations, leaders, and ministries to be supported well. I am grateful for the faithful work of our synod staff and for the many quiet details that help this shared ministry move forward. May the Lord bless you and keep you all!

In God's Mission Together,



Pr. Rebel Hurd



MINISTRY

by the numbers



Pr. Rebel Hurd: Associate to the Bishop for Mission | Director for Evangelical Mission



296

One-to-One
Intentional Leader
Conversations



139

Church visits and
Congregational
Engagement



52

Council President
Conversations



21

Board or council
conversations



40+

Conversations
with Global
Companions,
Andhra
Evangelical
Lutheran Church
in India



4

Mission Developer
Team Members
and Ministry Sites



3

Support Staff
Supervised



2

Holy Closures

