



Section 4

Reports of the Bishop, Vice Chair and Ministry Areas

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Section 4 - Reports of the Bishop, Vice Chair and Ministry Areas

Report of the Bishop

Rev. Dr. Michael J. Pryse

Report to be distributed at Assembly.

Report of the Vice-Chair

Linda Grainger

In the past 2 years, I have had the privilege and honour to serve as Vice-Chair of the Eastern Synod. As you know, I was elected as Secretary of ELCIC in July 2015. As a result, I have submitted my resignation as Vice-Chair.

I have attended Synod Council meetings, Officers' meetings, Deans' /Ministry Directors' meetings, National Convention, lay spiritual retreat, ordination services and meetings with Ministry Areas. I am thankful for these opportunities.

"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." (1 Peter 4:10)

In this verse, we are reminded that all of us have received gifts. These gifts are talents we are given for the good of the whole church. I would ask for your ongoing prayers and support as I use my gifts to support the work of our church, the ELCIC.

A heartfelt thanks to my fellow officers, Bishop Michael Pryse, Rev. Wendell Grahlman and Keith Myra for your support, encouragement and friendship over the years. Many thanks as well to you, the members of the Eastern Synod, for giving me the opportunity to serve as your Vice-Chair for the past 6 years. God Bless!

Report of the Atlantic Ministry Area

Atlantic Ministry Area Dean
Rev. Kimber McNabb

The past biennium has been about embracing ELCIC and Eastern Synod mission statements and practices, as well as putting into action conversations from the floor of Assemblies. Effort has been given to educating ourselves, so that grace may work through us to address the needs of this time and place. The Atlantic Ministry Area is committed to working in partnership with the wider church to be an Area of congregations *in mission for others*.

Significant Aspects of Work

- A Ministry Area wide gathering focused on First Nation's People: this included having the local KAIROS team, along with Elder Billie Lewis, to facilitate the Blanket Exercise; and Synod Archivist Karen Kuhnert to share with us the history of Lutheran immigrants to NS and First Nation's people.

- We practised spirited discipleship through two Ministry Area Advent retreat days. This past year's theme was from LWF: *Welcoming the Stranger*, which includes on-going support of an application to bring 12 Ethiopian refugees from Kenya (already have family in NS).
- Lunenburg County churches celebrated a joint Reformation service. Loose offering was a gift *in mission for others* to Lutheran Camp Mush-a-Mush and CLWR refugee sponsorship.
- Atlantic Lutheran Campus ministry continues to offer a chaplain presence on campus and to students in various Atlantic institutions. Some resources have been directed to Interfaith Harmony Week and the work of "Justice and Action" presentations - recent projects have included: relationship with creation (whales), food security, and addressing mental health through art.

Future Direction and Goal

- In 2017 the Ministry Area is planting a tree and encouraging congregations to participate in this National Church project for the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.
- This past biennium, a local task force was tasked with creating a proposal to address long-term sustainable ministry in Lunenburg, County, with the proposal being presented in spring 2016. The Ministry Area's future direction is to implement the proposal and fine tune it into reality.
- Partnerships continue with the Anglican Diocese of NS and PEI, and the Diocese of Fredericton. Currently there is a sharing of priests/pastors with potential for more shared ministries.

Report of the Central Toronto Ministry Area

Toronto Ministry Area Dean
Rev. Dr. Christian Ceconi

The Central Toronto Ministry Area is probably the most diverse area of the Eastern Synod: 21 congregations preaching the gospel in eight different languages in many different urban contexts. We understand the new area structure as a platform to bring congregations together to learn from each other, to be inspired by each other's perspectives and to cooperate wherever we can work together.

Under Dean Ilze Kuplens-Ewart the Area Leadership Team (ALT) hosted a visioning day in 2015 which brought together people who have a passion for cooperation and the wider church. Projects like a regular meeting of the administrators were created. Several congregations came together during the following months to learn about refugees and how to get sponsorships going.

To encourage cooperation the ALT works on a website which will be up and running in June 2016. The website www.LutheransToronto.org will serve as a platform to showcase congregations, to share best practises and to provide information and resources (e.g. contact information, documents from area workshops, etc.).

A second Area Workshop Day takes place on May 28, 2016 providing workshops about church music, volunteer management, social media, Sunday School, Summer camps, refugees and

social justice. The day starts with a breakfast buffet to encourage people to get to know each other across the area. In the future the Area Workshop Day will be held once a year.

A challenge for the ALT was several changes in the team. After the resignation of Dean Ilze the bishop appointed me as the new dean. Since then I try to reach the high standards that Ilze has set in the beginning with her strong and inspiring leadership. Rev. Brian Wilker-Frey had to leave the ALT in January due to his many other duties. We are very thankful for Ilze's and Brian's work for our area. We also thank all congregations for breathing life into the area and supporting this ministry. I am grateful to continue to work with Rev. Mavis Fung, Beckey Broadshaw, David Berg and Andrew Slonetsky towards our Vision:

"Working together: creating a vibrant church, relevant in our communities."

Report of the Georgian Ministry Area

Georgian Ministry Area Dean
Rev. John Polačok

Isaiah 43:19

¹⁹ *I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.*

The past year has found those of us involved in Georgian Bay Area Ministry, which stretches from Listowel in the South to Wiarton in the north and all points in between, very busy. The ministerial (clergy cluster) has met regularly throughout the year and on April 24, 2016, Rev. Catherine House was installed at Trinity Walkerton and last year, Rev. Heather Spencer was welcomed full-time at Trinity Lutheran Church in Ayton. We now have a full slate of regular call ministers once again in Georgian Bay and that lends itself to good feelings throughout the Ministry Area.

We also had a pastor resign his call, but for reasons that are life-giving to the greater community of Georgian Bay. Pastor Dwight Biggs has moved from Faith Lutheran Church, Port Elgin, to take the position of Director of Chaplaincy for Grey and Bruce Counties. We pray for Dwight in his call there and know that he is an excellent choice to lead the chaplaincy program for years to come.

Our churches are represented in Georgian Bay by an Area Ministry Team (AMT) consisting of three regions, north, central and south. Each congregation has a tier representative from whom three Area Leadership team (ALT) members have been chosen along with the representative from the Georgian Bay Women, and the dean. The hope in 2016-2017 is to add one or more youth representatives to the AMT. The idea of the AMT is for the tier representatives to provide clear means of communication within the congregations they serve and to other congregations in the Tier, and the Area as a whole, through their ALT representative. We are exploring different ways to communicate more effectively including the use of websites and social media.

In its first year, the ALT has chosen to focus on ministry to seniors as our churches and the area we serve is higher than the provincial average (between 60% - 80% seniors). This ministry includes assisting the YMCA Housing program with finding contacts in our local congregations to help identify resources from which seniors and others can draw for furniture, beds,

bedding, cutlery, etc and help with repairs such as electrical and plumbing. We have also endeavoured to make known all provincial programs offered to seniors. Early indications are this has gone well, but this is something that will need to be constantly updated as the programs and assistance levels offered changes. Finally, we are exploring the possibility of a training program for our members interested in volunteering in nursing homes and extended care facilities in our area. This program would be designed to assist medical staff in areas where they are over-burdened, hoping to lessen their load so the medical care they provide can be delivered at the highest levels.

It has been my honour to serve first as Dean of the Georgian Bay Conference and now for Georgian Bay Area Ministry. We look forward together now, doing the work of Christ, empowered by God's Spirit in the communities we serve.

Report of the GTA East Ministry Area

GTA East Ministry Area Dean
Rev. Dennis Becker

The GTA East Working Group is comprised of five congregations on the eastern edge of Toronto and beyond: Epiphany in Scarborough, Peace in Pickering, Christ the King in Whitby, Faith in Oshawa, and Christ in Peterborough. This collection of congregations presents the challenge of congregations located in and serving very different contexts, from urban multicultural Toronto to smaller, less diverse cities and those in between. We are enjoying the challenge.

A meeting was held in which all interested congregation members came together to share their vision for our area group. Many good ideas were generated at this meeting which has given us areas for thought and action.

A leadership group has been established and is busy exploring refugee sponsorship and working on a plan to encourage congregational support. The clergy of the GTA East group has gathered for Bible Study, discussion and fellowship. To this point, we have not gathered our congregations together for social functions or worship, but that has been discussed. As always, we enjoy when Bishop Pryse and an assistant come and share with us.

The active clergy continue to draw upon the wealth of knowledge and wisdom of our retired pastors, who regularly attend our clergy gatherings. They are an invaluable resource.

A bond of fellowship, camaraderie, and service is developing within this group and we look forward to see when our Lord leads us. May God grant us the courage to follow.

Report of the GTA West Ministry Area

GTA West Ministry Area Dean
Rev. Nadine Nicholds

The GTA West ministry area is comprised of four congregations: Augsburg Lutheran, Brampton; Holy Spirit of Peace Anglican Lutheran, Mississauga; Grace Lutheran, Oakville; and St. Philip's Lutheran, Etobicoke.

Being a small area has positives and negatives. On the positive side of things, the clergy are a supportive group. We are able to be attentive to each other spiritually and emotionally that a large group might not be able to sustain. On the negative side, there are too few congregations, with very limited resources, to accomplish the goals set out for ministry areas.

Here are a few things that we have done in the past two years: two congregations meet together for weekly Bible study; the senior's groups from the congregations have met on occasion; there is an open invitation from one congregation to an annual Christmas carolling event; two congregations are beginning the process to sponsor a refugee family; the clergy meet on a regular basis for support and information sharing. These events and projects will continue in the coming years.

I suspect that, in the long view, the GTA west ministry area will have to be absorbed into larger ministry areas that are more intrinsic to the location of each of the congregations. In doing so, it will better facilitate the missional focus that defines the purpose of the ministry areas. In the meantime, the GTA West area will do what we can, with the resources we have, and live in hope that, with God, all things are possible.

Report of the Huronia Ministry Area

Huronian Ministry Area Dean
Rev. Ann Krueger

Huronian Ministry Area is unique within the Eastern Synod in two ways. First, we are the smallest ministry area, composed of only three churches. Second, we are the only ministry area where 2/3 of our churches are Anglican-Lutheran partnerships! Our ministry area consists of St. David's Anglican-Lutheran Church of Orillia, St. Mark's Anglican-Lutheran Church of Midland and Westside Evangelical Lutheran Church in Barrie.

What we have in common is our location, for we are all perched on the shores of beautiful lakes at the edge of Ontario's popular vacation land. Like all communities on or near the shores of Lake Huron, we also experience "lake-effect" - winter storms that make travel challenging in that season - we don't try to meet then! Also, we hold in common a strong appreciation for the Eastern synod and the Lutheran approach to faith. Partnerships help us to have a fresh awareness of our joint traditions, and to celebrate the best of both worlds!

Since our congregations do not know each other very well, our first efforts as a ministry area have been to build relationships. Our first gathering was a Sunday afternoon picnic on the shores of Lake Couchiching in Orillia last October. We are planning fun and educational events that will encourage our members to come together. Especially we hope to build relationships as a ministry area with our neighbours, the Chippewa people of Rama First Nation and Beausoliel First Nation.

Report of the Grand River Ministry Area

Grand River Ministry Area Dean
Rev. James Koellner

The Grand River Ministry Area includes thirteen churches serving Kitchener, Cambridge and Guelph. The inaugural gathering of the ministry area was a Reformation service held at the Lutheran Church of the Reformation in Kitchener. During the past biennium, the following activities have taken place.

- Active and retired clergy continue to meet on a monthly basis. The initial meetings provided a forum for sharing and education. In recent months the collegiality and openness among clergy has provided opportunities to celebrate the high points of life and ministry and to reach out to and support one another in dealing with ministry challenges.
- The Leadership Team has spent a lot of its time in learning about one another and developing a strategy whereby congregations can learn to work and grow together. This work developed into two meetings for laity and clergy to examine ways in which congregations can make it happen. The Leadership Team is also using its resources to provide spiritual care to clergy on leave of call and to congregations seeking to transition to a new form of ministry in the future.
- A joint multi-week confirmation program for 25-35 youth was held several times over the past two years. Its format of flexibility and openness allowed for a working partnership and a sharing of resources among clergy and laity of Two Rivers and Georgian Ministry Areas, Rev. Anne Anderson of Third Space, and the use of the seminary facilities.
- Retired clergy have met regularly under the leadership of Rev. Karen Kuhnert to worship and learn how they can continue to be useful to the church in the sharing of their experiences and knowledge, and to enjoy one another's camaraderie.
- Several congregations continue to gather together for fellowship and worship during the season of Lent, while others continue to work with other local churches in a ministry of community outreach.

In the future the Leadership Team will be looking to:

- Work with Women of Faith groups and encourage them to seek out partnerships where numbers are dwindling.
- Further develop cooperation among congregations and encourage congregations with few numbers of confirmands to participate in and support the confirmation events.
- Develop a social event to include all parishes.

A special word of thanks to the members of the Leadership Team - Rev. Richard Schwass, Rev. Jennifer Wirt, Fay Albrecht, and Shirley Mitchell-Grumme - for their ongoing support and guidance.

Report of the Montreal Ministry Area

Montreal Ministry Area Dean
Rev. James Slack

For more than two decades the Montreal Lutheran Council has provided lay and clergy leaders in our region with a forum to plan events and discuss matters of mutual concern. When the Eastern Synod Assembly voted, in 2014, to disband the conferences and establish ministry areas, the nine congregations on Montreal were able to take advantage of this long history of clergy and lay cooperation. The elected executive of our group constitutes the Montreal Ministry Area leadership team: Dean Pastor Jim Slack, Vice-Chairperson Roger Kenner, Secretary Carol Meindl, and Treasurer Pastor Matthew Anderson.

Our meetings include regular reports about the activities and health of our congregations, the status of our website, comment from our Anglican partner, and updates from the Christian-Jewish Dialogue of Montreal. The bulk of our funding comes in the form of congregational fees.

On a given Sunday Lutherans in Montreal worship in six languages, with a few others spoken on special occasions. Two of our congregations are served by full-time pastors. The others are cared for part-time by interim and retired clergy. After several years of negotiations St. Michael's Finnish Church sold its building downtown, and decided to share space with St. John's Estonian Church. Upon severing ties with Peace in Ottawa the future of Trinity Latvian Church in Lachine is uncertain.

In January 2015 we welcomed Robert Granke and Tom Brooks from Canadian Lutheran World Relief. A Saturday evening information session at Christ the Redeemer was followed by congregational visits on Sunday.

In the spring of the previous year we held our first annual meeting, to which all members of our congregations were invited. The session at St. Paul's included brief reports and plans for the future, and featured a movie created by the Rev. Dr. Matthew Anderson about his experience on the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage trail.

In response to motions adopted by the national church and synod we organised a visit to Kahnawake last fall. Our tour included stops at the Welcome Centre, the Cultural Centre, and a local restaurant. In February of this year we helped to sponsor a follow-up event called *Christians and the Doctrine of Discovery* at St. John's Estonian Church, with three well-qualified speakers, included the Rev. Dr. Allen Jorgenson from Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. We also plan to attend the Pow Wow as a group the week after Assembly.

We also held a Luther Pub Night at St. John's in October, welcoming the Rev. Drs. Jarred Carty and Gordon Jensen as presenters. Participants enjoyed bread, sausages and beer.

The Easter Vigil at St. John's is a perennial highlight, with Pastor Eric Dyck, congregational leaders and musicians leading what many consider the best vigil in Montreal.

An annual picnic is held off-island each August, with worship, lunch, and games for all ages. It is attended by more than 100.

In the coming year several of our congregations are planning to work together to sponsor a family of Syrian refugees. Two concerts, an international Bishop's visit, an ecumenical Reformation celebration and a craft beer are being considered as part of our 2017 Reformation celebration.

Report of the Niagara Ministry Area

Niagara Ministry Area Dean
Rev. Thomas Arth

The Niagara Ministry Area comprises seven ELCIC congregations. Our churches are relatively close in proximity in this area, the longest distance between any two congregations being about 45 km.

Since the dissolution of the former conferences and the formation of the ministry areas, the clergy in Niagara have been meeting periodically. We have appreciated the annual visits by Bishop Pryse and his assistants.

Our ministry area was a little slow in getting our Leadership Team formed. We eventually formed the team with representation by either a clergyperson or a layperson from each of the seven congregations in the area. The first area wide event that we hosted took place on Sunday, June 14, 2015 when the members of all the area congregational councils were invited to gather together. On that Sunday afternoon we spent some time in Bible Study, introduced everyone to this new entity called the Niagara Ministry Area, and brainstormed together about some of the things we might like to do together as a ministry area. We ended the afternoon with a potluck supper.

Since the formation and appointment of our leadership team we have met periodically to discuss where we go and what we will do collectively. The first goal we're planning to pursue is involvement in the ELCIC's Reformation Challenge, specifically tree planting. We found a few opportunities to pursue and are planning a concert in September of this year as a fundraiser to pay for some tree planting.

We haven't exactly hit the ground running but once we got ourselves organized we decided to work toward getting something done that each congregation can be involved in as much as they feel they can or want to be. One thing that the leadership team will do in the near future is clarify our purpose and develop a vision for what we see our congregations doing together as a ministry area, how we can work together in God's mission for our communities and the world.

Report of the Nith Valley Ministry Area

Nith Valley Ministry Area Dean
Rev. Bonnie Schelter-Brown

14 Congregations - God's Love in Action is the Vision of The Nith Valley Ministry Area (NVMA) and we have spent the last biennium living this out. The principles that guide us to live out this vision are **Transform, Action, Share, Faith, and Empower**.

Over the past year the NVMA has had the privilege of joining two other ministry area teams, OMALT (Ottawa) and Central Toronto for some leadership training with Jerry Hogeveen, Kristine Savage, and Pat Lovell. This training has helped us build up our leadership team and it gave us many tools to work together more effectively, to dream big, and to lead our area towards those big dreams. Thank you to Jerry, Kristine, and Pat for sharing your gifts with us. I would also like to thank Bishop Michael Pryse and his team for making leadership training available to the NVMA Leadership Team over the past year.

One of the ways we are living out our vision for the area is through our joint confirmation program. This program focusses on putting our faith in action. Our classes included delivering Christmas Hampers, working at our local family resource center, spending time at Easter with seniors, visiting Mohawk Institute which included a tour of a residential school and museum and closing with worship at Mohawk Chapel. We have set a goal of planting 200 trees for the ELCIC Reformation Challenge and had a visit from Bishop Michael Pryse as well. This shift from sitting in class in our individual churches to going out together and learning through engaging the community has really sparked the attention of our youth as we work together in partnership living out our faith in God who moves us.

The NVMA Leadership Team has also held two Round Ups, which are a gathering of the 14 churches to build relationships, have conversation, and also some dreaming of big dreams. By the time you read this report we will have held our third Round Up with a plan to set some goals for the area and then crafting a plan to work at achieving some of these big dreams.

Over the past biennium it feels like there has been a shift in the NVMA towards real cooperation and collaboration. I have heard important questions asked like "How are we as Lutherans a voice for God in this community and in our world" and "What can we do together better than we can do alone?". There is still work to be done and so we move forward with a good spirit of care for the world and commitment to each other and to God who leads the path.

I would like to thank the NVMA Leadership Team - Bruce Cook, Laura Prust, Sister Anne Keffer, Pastor Jeff Lausten, Margaret Harbinson, Ross Campbell, our Coach Pastor Tanya Ramer and our Communication Guy Pastor Richard Brown - for your hard work, dedication, energy, and your great passion for the mission of the church.

Report of the Northern Ministry Area

Northern Ministry Area Dean
Rev. Glenda Morrisette

The Northern Area consists of nine churches - Redeemer/Trinity Commanda North Bay; St. Paul's Magnetawan; St. Matthew's Sudbury; St. Timothy's Copper Cliff; Trinity Sudbury; Zion Massey; Faith Elliot Lake; Zion Sault Ste. Marie; and St. John's South Porcupine. To go from Magnetawan to Sault Ste Marie is 514 km and from Sudbury up to South Porcupine is 306 km. We are separated by distance but united in our desire to spread the gospel of Jesus the Christ to Northern Ontario in word and in deed.

The pastors have told me about their joys and struggles that have occurred in their church over the past year. There are too many to list all of them, but the reports were mainly ones of joy.

St. Matthew's and St. Timothy's voted for unification of the two congregations on October 25 and the process of joining the two parishes continues. They saw the departure of three of their pastors - Rev. Kristin Luana and Rev. Olaf Baumann who went back to the United States as well as Rev. Vihtori Leskela who went back to Finland. A joy for them is the arrival of Rev. Charles Nolting as their interim pastor. St. Timothy's hosted the Spring Northern Area Event where the St. Stephen Jubilation Youth Choir from Bloomington, Minnesota performed Joseph and the Technicolor Dreamcoat. They continue to hold Messy Church events and work alongside the Copper Cliff Ministerial. St. Matthew's and Trinity also work with their local ministerial and are in the planning process of the upcoming ELEVATE weekend held in May.

ELEVATE is a Sudbury city-wide event that has all the local churches doing community service on a Saturday and a joint service on the Sunday.

Trinity in Sudbury spent the majority of their time and resources over the past year serving the community. They worked with the local soup kitchen; gave to the foodbank; collected coffee for the mission center; collected articles for the patients at the local psychiatric facility; and filled a crib with baby articles for the local Pregnancy Care center. Many of the Northern Churches participated in community service opportunities over the past year. St. Matthew's has its own Foodbank and has a café for the people in the community. Redeemer, over the past 20 years has given out 40,000 coats by holding their annual Operation Warmth program. They also give out tons of winter apparel. This year they extended their mission to Canadore College where they assisted them in setting up a Student's Closet where they could drop off and get winter coats, hats and mitts. St. John's in South Porcupine collected socks to assist in a local out-of-the-cold outreach program. They also collected school supplies for an Indigenous group of evacuees temporarily located in Kapuskasing.

St. John's has a wonderful interim pastor, Rev. Patricia Dorland, who is from the Anglican Church of Canada. Her home is in Cochrane, but she goes to South Porcupine twice a month to provide services. It has been a successful year of being in communion with the Anglican Church. They, as well as St. Matthew's, continue with the joys and struggles of meeting the needs of their Finnish congregation. Ministers from the Suomi Conference continue to provide pastors for Finnish services at St. John's.

Another church that has Finnish services is Zion in Sault Ste. Marie. They have been very active in being In Mission for Others. They serve at a regular meal program at an agency in downtown Sault Ste. Marie, providing food for a youth program/shelter and being connected with an after-school program at an Anglican church in the Sault. They also give regularly to global needs through CLWR. This year they have been spearheading an ecumenical effort to bring refugee families to Sault Ste. Marie. This group called New Beginnings includes people from many Christian denominations, the local mosque and interested community partners. They are awaiting the arrival of a family from Syria.

Magnetawan has had a year of many joys - good attendance; wonderful fellowship; a great team of volunteers and a surprising openness to try new things. St. Paul's decided in November to install solar panels on the roof of the church with the vision that there still will be ministry done there in 20 years. They also continue to work with some local churches to reach out to the community to spread the Good News that we're set free.

Faith in Elliot Lake and Zion in Massey have seen the departure of both Rev. Thomas Zumbrock, who retired this past year as well as Rev. Syd Hills who decided to retire 'again'. They will now be served by a new interim, Rev. Henk Willems from the Anglican Church in Elliot Lake. They too have been reaching out into the community through giving to the local foodbank. The attendance is up a bit in Elliot Lake with six new members joining this year. Zion in Massey put new basement windows in their church and have been saving on the heating costs. They continue to deal with the reality of a small town where unemployment is high and their attendance is struggling.

The struggles that face us all are the same as the struggles that face most congregations and that is the lack of younger families with children who are attending church. We are in competition with sports, dance and music and some days it feels like we are losing but as Rev. Gerald Slote put it, "We cannot compete with what the world around us has to offer is a

given, but our joy is lifted up as we recognize we don't have to compete, just be present, which is not easy."

We continue to be a presence in the North and we will continue to be. We strive to not be so heavenly minded that we are no earthly good.

Report of the Ottawa Ministry Area

Ottawa Ministry Area Dean
Rev. Martin Malina

Since the last Synod Assembly in 2014, the Ottawa Ministry Area has settled naturally into its new boundary. Its eight congregations are located in close proximity to one another within Ottawa city limits. Prior to the synodical bylaw changes, these congregations already constituted a natural geographical 'cluster' of congregations within the Ottawa-St Lawrence Conference, whose clergy met regularly for many years.

All this is to say, we were geographically primed for the shift to Areas. What was new, and proved a challenge, was the 'cultural' shift initiated in 2014 towards a revised leadership structure within the Area. The last biennium saw the introduction of the Ottawa Ministry Area Leadership Team (OMALT) presided by an appointed Dean (by the Bishop). OMALT comprised of eight members, chosen by the Dean and appointed by the Bishop. Most of OMALT's membership was selected by lay leaders from Area congregations, according to gifts and abilities in the following three areas: Mission, Communications, and Pastoral Care.

At the beginning of the biennium, OMALT's membership included:

Marie-Laure Collet, Rebekah Hackbusch, Ken Grahlman, Miranda Gray, Rev. Martin Malina (Dean), Scott Porter, Rev. Bonnie Scharf, and Steve Thornton. At the end of this biennium, we have bid farewell to Rev. Bonnie Scharf and Scott Porter who both moved away from Ottawa. We have since welcomed Anna Koolstra-Kelley to the team.

During this biennium, Area Lutherans bid farewell to Rev. Gundars Berzins (Peace Latvian Lutheran Church) and Rev. Deborah 'Duffy' Taylor (Mount Calvary Lutheran Church). In the last few months we have welcomed Rev. Ilmars Zvirgzds to Peace Latvian, and Rev. JoAnne Lam to Mount Calvary. The other active clergy in the Area remain: Rev. Bart Beglo (St Peter's Lutheran Church), Rev. Joel Crouse (St John Lutheran Church), Rev. Friedrich Demke (Martin Luther German Lutheran Church), Rev. Mei Sum Lai (Resurrection Lutheran Church), Rev. Martin Malina (Faith Lutheran Church), and Rev. Stephen Silverthorne (Good Shepherd Anglican-Lutheran Church).

Retired/inactive clergy residing on the territory of the Ottawa Ministry Area remain: Rev. Ted Heinze, Rev. Stan Johnstone, Rev. Jan Malina, Rev. Joanna Malina, Rev. Diane Raddatz, and Rev. Silvia Zalts-Sipolins.

OMALT was fortunate to be included as one of three Ministry Areas in the Synod to receive special leadership training by Synod staff since 2015. We attended three workshops in the Toronto area in six months to hone our skills and develop mission priorities and goals. A special thank you to Bishop Pryse, Pat Lovell, Jerry Hogeveen, Kris Savage, and mentor Rev. Ben Coltvet for facilitating our learning and development in leadership. Thank you, also, to the Deans and Leadership Teams from the Nith Valley and Central Toronto Ministry Areas (Rev.

Bonnie Shelter-Brown & Rev. Ilze Kuplens-Ewert, respectively) for our mutual learning experience during these workshops.

The vision OMALT pursues in all its activities is greater visible unity among our congregations, in shared ministry programs and worship events. OMALT sets as its immediate goals a visit to each congregational council, in order to listen for the stories that describe the history and purpose of each congregation. Our successes also include realizing increased coordination for shared worship events, such as summer time Sunday exchanges (where one or more congregations close their doors to meet at another congregation's building) and a shared Ash Wednesday service, when in 2016 over one hundred from 6 of 8 congregations gathered together in one location (St Peter's) to worship together.

Our big goal is focused in 2017, during the 500th anniversary of the start of the Lutheran Reformation - a shared worship event on Sunday, October 29, 2017, when we hope all (approx.) 450 average weekly worship attenders in Ottawa (ELCIC) congregations gather in one place to celebrate our Lutheran identity and send a message of visible unity, hope and grace from today's church, to the world.

Report of the Ottawa Valley Ministry Area

Ottawa Valley Ministry Area Dean
Rev. Paul Roellchen-Pfohl

Due to transitions and health issues our ministry area had its organizational meeting on February 20th, 2016. Along with the dean we have four members serving on the team based on clusters of congregations in the area. At this initial meeting we highlighted what is going well in our congregations, our hopes for the future and our needs as we look at the people we currently serve.

As a result of the discussions we are going to focus on three facets of ministry. First, we are seeking ways to assist elders in their worship life at church and their life at home helping their caregivers giving them support. Next, we will seek to develop proper care and feeding of our families, young and old in their physical, spiritual, emotional and mental aspects of lives. In our discussions we discovered that there are many "silos" in our churches. Silos isolate people and congregations from each other by forcing us to work alone on common aspects of life in the church. By cooperating and sharing ministry together we can more effectively use the time and talents with which God has richly blessed the Body of Christ. In the future we will work together on "silo removal" in our ministry area.

Report of the Seaway Ministry Area

Seaway Ministry Area Dean
Rev. Steve Hoffard

The Seaway ministry area formed logically from the old Seaway ministry cluster and geographically finds itself stretched along the St. Lawrence Seaway. We are made up of Holy Trinity - Belleville, St. Mark's - Kingston, Good Shepherd - Brockville, South Dundas Lutheran Community Church Parish (formed from the prior congregations of St. Peter's - Williamsburg and St. Paul's - Morrisburg), St. John's- Riverside Heights, St. Luke's Dunbar and the specialized prison ministry of Rev. Sylvia Poetschke.

A Seaway Ministry Area Leadership Team has been appointed to discover ways that we can as an area plan, promote, and implement the mission of the church.

Early in 2015 we held a visioning seminar in Brockville and used it to discover all the gifts God has blessed us with in this ministry area, and we also began to discern how we might best use those gifts.

We are talking about ways in which each congregation can support and connect with another. We will begin by praying for one another and creating events that include invitations to the other congregations.

This is not easy work, the distance we are apart from one another is a challenge. As well, many of our congregations are in transition of one form or another and are having difficulty finding the resources to engage beyond their own local contexts.

It has been both challenging and exciting to look at new ways of living out God's plan with courage and faith. We live in expectation and confidence that exciting days of ministry lie ahead as we trust God's promises of resurrected life along the seaway.

Report of the Thames Ministry Area

Thames Ministry Area Dean
Rev. Laura Sauder

Assembly 2014 marked the formation of the Thames Ministry Area from a portion of what had been the London Conference. We are eight congregations from city, small town, and rural communities that span from Windsor and Leamington east to London and Aylmer, and north to Zurich and Brodhagen.

It took a bit of time and effort for our new ministry area to get off the ground, but on November 7, 2015 we had our first official gathering at the Thames Ministry Area. Redeemer, London hosted "Reconciliation & Us" where three elders from the Sarnia area led us through the Blanket Exercise. We had close to 40 participants representing 7 of our area congregations. This was an important step for us in the journey towards right relations as the process resulted in meeting and working with some of our indigenous neighbours, and learning more about the history and present-day patterns of colonialism in Canada and in our area.

In spite of geographical challenges, the active and retired clergy gather faithfully each month for mutual support, fellowship, and breaking bread. We rotate our meetings so that we all take turns traveling the longer distances.

There have been several transitions in the Thames area over the past biennium. In spring 2015, Rev. Heather Spencer-Stoltz resigned her call to Redeemer and St. Ansgar, London to accept the call to Trinity, Ayton. Subsequently, Redeemer and St. Ansgar discontinued their shared ministry in favour of calling their own pastors. Rev. Katherine Altenburg accepted the call to Redeemer, London and was installed February 21, 2016. Rev. David Wirt accepted the call to St. Ansgar, London and was installed April 10, 2016. On September 11, 2015 Trinity, London hosted the ordinations of Sylvia Swiatoschik and Mark Kalvaitis. Rev. Swiatoschik was then installed as the pastor of St. Paul's, Leamington on September 27, 2015.

From around the ministry area:

On October 18, 2014 the women of Trinity, London hosted the Thames Ministry Area Women's Fall Gathering "Mission Possible?" Unfortunately, the same gathering in 2015 to be hosted in Zurich was cancelled due to lack of registration.

The ALSOC (Anglican Lutheran Stewards of Creation) youth group continues to meet regularly, bringing together youth from many of our area congregations and beyond.

In 2014, Redeemer, London and St. Ansgar, London celebrated their 60th anniversaries.

In 2016, St John's, Aylmer passed a motion to allow for the blessing of same-sex marriages

Trinity, Redeemer, and St. Andrew Memorial Anglican Church, all of London, have partnered to sponsor a Syrian refugee family

Last but not least, thank you to those who serve with me on our leadership team and took on this challenge of discerning a way forward for our area ministry: Rev. Steve Johnston, Bob McGee, and Ruth Molzan. As we look ahead, there is interest in building on the success of our November 2015 gathering by continuing on the path towards right relations in our ministry area.

Report of The Bay Ministry Area

The Bay Ministry Area Dean
Rev. Thomas Mertz

The creation of the new areas has proven to be very helpful for the now eight congregations of the Bay Area. Their close geographic proximity allows for quarterly meetings of the area conference and bi-monthly gatherings of the clergy. Congregations have also linked their websites. During the Week of Prayer for Unity they enjoyed a pulpit rotation and came together in joint worship on three occasions.

Transfiguration, Grace, Faith (Hamilton) and St. John's jointly celebrated their 60th. Anniversaries and welcomed Bishop Dr. Michael Pryse as preacher and guest of honour for the service and banquet on June 7.

The Bay Area picnic at Germania Park outside Hamilton brought us together for singing with "The Ole Mishaps", a great BBQ and games.

The new leadership team was established in the spring and officially installed at a joint service at Faith in Brantford on Reformation Sunday with Rev. Dr. Mark Harris, Principal Dean of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary preaching.

The Bay Area Youth met on several occasions for confirmation retreats and SOC/ALSOC weekends. We are proud to send a group of 18 youths to the upcoming CLAY event to PEI in August.

Faith, Brantford, Holy Cross, Burlington and St. John's, Hamilton are sponsoring and resettling refugees from Syria, Sudan and Somalia. They partner with other churches and the wider community in this important ministry. While Holy Cross and Faith have already welcomed their families, St. John's is still eagerly waiting for the arrival of two families from Somalia. St. John's acceptance of the second sponsorship was made possible through a most generous

donation from Faith Lutheran Church in Brantford, which provided the necessary funds on top of raising the means for their own refugee project.

Grace and Faith in Hamilton continue to collaborate in their Good Food Box and Community Gardens projects. The focus is on community food distribution and community food education service working to prevent and alleviate poverty.

Faith in Brantford operates a food pantry that assists approximately 40 families and/or individuals every two weeks. The church is also home to a large CLWR sewing group that welcomes people from the community to engage in sewing and fellowship together with members of our parish.

Transfiguration in Hamilton also has a CLWR sewing ministry.

Christ Latvian in Hamilton serves the Latvian population of the city and offers a language program.

Last fall, councils of Faith, Hamilton and St. John's discussed the idea of a shared ministry between the two congregations and quickly came to an agreement. Their proposals presented to congregational meetings in November, were overwhelmingly accepted. Both congregations will remain independent churches, but over the next three years share pastors and seek to partner in their various ministries. Both congregations celebrated the beginning of their shared ministry with a joyful service in January. Rev. Riitta Hepomaki of the Eastern Synod officiated the commissioning of the pastoral team.

With generous support of the Eastern Synod mission fund St. John's was able to start a three year mission project in Ward II of Hamilton and call a part-time missionary, Rev. Chun Zhang, who began his ministry in March.

Redeemer in Fisherville, smallest congregation of the Bay Area however with the largest childrens' group, is currently vacant.

The focus of our Bay Area ministry efforts over the next two years will be primarily on the commemoration of the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation.

Report of Two Rivers Ministry Area

Two Rivers Ministry Area Dean
Rev. Elina Salonen

Two Rivers Ministry Area is on the traditional territory of the Six Nations of the Grand River. And so we give thanks! We thank God for the blessing of the people of the Six Nations and ask God's help as we seek better relationships with them.

We give thanks to the people of Faith, Fergus-Elora for sharing their pastor with the area in her work as the dean of Two Rivers. Their generosity, encouragement, and participation have been a great blessing for the whole Two Rivers Ministry Area and their pastor.

Thanks, as well, to the area leadership team of Barb Finn of St. James, Elmira and Jackie Nunns of Mt. Zion, Waterloo. What a joy it has been to work with them! A joy and a whole lot of help they have been to me and to our area.

Rev. Monika Wiesner of St Matthew's Conestogo is due our gratitude, too, for her participation for much of the year as part of our team. Rev. Wiesner is trained in the Mission Action Plan

initiative used by the Church of England. From this discussion came the question of underlying values, which led to our area visitation proposal.

Thanks to colleagues and sister congregations in Two Rivers Ministry Area, who have enthusiastically participated in our events, sharing their ministry with us as part of their hosting of our meetings, and their continued support of each other by attending our meeting, creating initiatives to work on together, and finding ways to lead a hand to each other! Two Rivers Ministry Area consists of 11 faith communities - 10 congregations and thirdspace_, a new innovative ministry initiative located at the Waterloo Lutheran Seminary.

Our ministry area work was begun with New Beginnings worship (Nov 23rd, 2014) at which water from the two rivers of our area was poured into a baptismal font, blessed and then shared with all 11 faith communities, along with seeds, representing the seeds of faith and community we are planting in our area. We are filled with gratitude for this gift of renewed relationships and fresh opportunities.

Our meetings are open to all members of Two Rivers Ministry Area - lay and clergy. We rotate among our area congregations and meet in about 6 week intervals.

An important part of our gatherings has been the opportunity for the host congregation to introduce themselves to us - their history, big milestones, current ministry and mission, and future direction and dreams.

Each of our meetings also has an educational component, such as Bible study on Welcoming the Stranger, Salvation Not for Sale and the like. Guest speakers have included, for example, Rev. André Lavergne (Assistant to the National Bishop, Ecumenical and Interfaith), who informed and encouraged us about the ministry of the ELCIC; Diaconal Minister of Music Scott Knarr on his work with Six Nations regarding music camp, suicide prevention, and the blanket exercise modified for Two Rivers context; Rev. Gloria Ryder, Chaplain at Trinity Village Care Centre, on how to communicate with our loved-ones experiencing memory challenges; and Rev. Katherine Altenburg (Ministry Director of Public Policy and Service Public Ministries) encouraged us in our own passion for social justice.

When Rev. Lavergne spoke to us, other ministry areas were invited to participate, as he prepared us to participate and navigate through the coming national convention. Big thank you all of our guest presenters! Your generosity and wisdom have enriched our whole community!

We thank Bishop Pryse for meeting with active area clergy each year, sharing with us his concerns and hearing ours. It is helpful for us to have this sharing each year. One of the topics was beacons of hope - our collegiality is definitely one of them! Again, we have rotated amongst our faith communities honoring the ministry of the local pastors and the congregations they serve.

Thanks to Conrad Knabenschuh of Christ, Waterloo our Two Rivers Ministry Area has a website. Each faith community in the ministry area was given access to the website so that others can learn and potentially share in their activities. The Leadership Team has worked hard to ensure clear and transparent communication amongst Two Rivers congregations. It is important to make sure we all, lay and clergy, are aware of who we are, what is going on in the area communities, and what avenues are available to us to share in the work of ministry and encourage and support each other.

Jackie Nunns led a study on sacramental ministry last winter also in preparation for the national convention. All area congregations were welcomed to participate. This winter Two Rivers and Grand River Ministry Area congregations were invited for the study of Speaking Christian, (Re)Thinking the Words we Use in Church. Thank you to the facilitators Jackie Nunns, Rev. Anne Anderson, and Rev. Jennifer Hoover-Wirt (Grand River Ministry Area).

Several of our area congregations participate in Confirmation Days held largely at the seminary, again along with folks from Grand River Ministry Area. These days afford youth, around confirmation age, the opportunity to connect with others and to learn about a variety of topics, including about the CLWR with Heather Pryse, history of First Nations people with Rev. Karen Kuhnert and to participate in learning and fun activities like the Blanket Exercise led by Wilfrid Laurier's Aboriginal Students' Association, baking communion bread, trying on vestments, and many, many more. Worship is wonderful! And there was even a trip to the country for a fall fair and learning about programs of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

Rev. Fred Ludolph is leading us in putting into action our national response to the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation by planting trees all around Two Rivers Ministry Area. Rev. Ludolph reports that our Confirmation Day youth are helping with the project. He is also working together with Conservation Authorities etc. as opportunities present themselves in addition to our faith communities in an effort to build awareness about good stewardship of creation and, of course, to meet our goal of planting 500 trees by the end of 2017. We would like to respectfully challenge all our fellow Ministry Areas to plant 500 trees each!

Several Two Rivers Ministry Area congregations are sponsoring refugees and others are supporting the efforts of their neighbours by supplying funds and help to the refugee families. As well, some Two Rivers congregations have formed partnerships with their ecumenical neighbours, community groups and churches from other Ministry Areas to share in this common effort of Welcoming the Stranger.

Synod council approved a grant request, which enabled the Leadership Team to make a visit to each Two Rivers faith community to learn about their values and interests in mission and ministry but mainly to honour their ministries, and to get to know them better. The Leadership Team's vision is to build meaningful connections between people in the area congregations, and as they choose to, to invite congregations to find ways of doing things together. The visits took place between January 2016 and June 2016. The request for congregations was that the Team would be able to introduce the Two Rivers Ministry Area during or after worship extending an invitation from their sisters and brothers in Two Rivers to participate in the life of the Ministry Area. The Team had prepared questions (Thank you to Jerry Hogeveen for his thoughtful counsel.) to ask, offering folks an opportunity to share with their ideas, successes, things that they would like support to achieve, so that together the Area communities can explore a variety of ways of "being in mission with others".

Two Rivers Ministry Area also partnered with the people of the Six Nations Anglican Parish and Mt Zion, Waterloo, responding to the call of the Eastern Synod Biennium Reconciliation Initiative in an effort to continue building fruitful relationships already established at Six Nations through Scott Knarr's diaconal internship, and deepening them further by inviting all members of TRMA faith communities to walk with the people of the Six Nations of the Grand River community. This grant has three goals.

1. to educate and raise awareness among TRMA faith communities about our respective histories and the realities facing Indigenous people in Canada today.

2. to embrace the openness of the Six Nations Anglican Parish to be in relationship with TRMA faith communities by providing opportunities for people to develop connections.
3. to strengthen and develop opportunities to walk together toward a future of hope and healing through concrete actions.

Singing together has a unique ability to gather and connect diverse groups of people. With each new voice the song becomes stronger, gaining richness and blending many together as one; the whole becomes more than the sum of the parts. One example of how Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples can work together to build community is through the Music for the Spirit initiative. This community music camp gathers young and old, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, Christian and Traditional, to build self-esteem, nurture respect and provide a unique creative outlet for expressing emotions.

This is what I know for sure - we are blessed with much and are encouraged to share from our abundance in mission and ministry by being active, joyful participating members of the wider church!