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| **Get to know the Bishop** |

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| Beloved, I thank you for your patience as I’ve been on a bit of a health-concern-hiatus the last number of months. I thank you for your prayers and messages, as well. Moving forward, I’ll be writing a series on stories or interviews with pastors within our synod! Maybe it’s a call story detailing how your pastor became a pastor; maybe it’s a specific story on ministry once they got started. Pastors are people with unique stories just like the rest of us. If you’d like to nominate yourself or your pastor for this series, please email me (sarah.flatt@gmail.com)! Now, on to learning more about our Bishop, Don Kreiss, who is pastor to all the pastors in the synod. Long ago, in a time far away (a time known as the ‘80s), our Bishop was not a pastor at all. In fact, he was a United Methodist! He was also a very active youth in his congregation, and because of that, he knew more about the “drama” between his Senior and Associate pastor than was good for him.. Eventually, the turmoil was too much, and he left the United Methodist Church at the same time he headed off to college at Northwestern University. Don, however, did not leave the church. In his sophomore year of college, he was invited by friend (and currently a pastor in our synod) Joel Brandt to go to the Lutheran Center for worship. “It felt like it mattered that I was there, because after greeting me at the door, the pastor remembered my name at the communion rail.” One simple and genuine invitation, along with one small effort on the pastor’s part, changed the course of Don’s life. Working a few summers at camps full of young adults feeling the call to ministry, Don took a few extra years to eventually attend seminary: “But when it happened, it was a fast process. I sent in the application  on a Tuesday and started classes the following Monday.” The process for a pastor’s first call looked a little different in the early ‘90s. Don told me: “Because I had no obligations, I was unrestricted. “And in 1992, the least requested region to be assigned to was 6, and the least requested  synod was 6A, the Southeast Michigan Synod. And yet I was called there, with a call letter arriving on graduation day.” There’s a rumor that Joel Brandt helped with this change of course in Don’s life, too. The story goes that Pastor Joel was at the Synod office on the day that Bishop Phil Wahl received a list of seminary graduates.. The Bishop asked Pastor Joel if he knew any of them, and, pointing to Don’s name, Pastor Joel said, “You could do worse.” Regardless of how Don was called to this synod, he hasn’t left since he arrived. His first summer in a congregation, Don took kids to Michi-Lu-Ca.. It was there that he met his wife, Kristin; they got along quite well, and by the end of the week, there was a date scheduled for September after she was done with camp. “We were engaged in January  and then married in November.” Don served as pastor to King of Glory Lutheran Church in Flushing for over 5 years, and there he and Kristin started a family. He then was called to Antioch Lutheran Church, Farmington Hills, as Associate Pastor. After his colleague there, Bob Rimbo was called as Bishop, Don became the Senior Pastor. He stayed at Antioch for 13 years before he was called as Bishop. Entering his 3rd term as Bishop last year, Don sees that his role has changed a bit. Our synod had a rough number of years in the Bishop’s office before his first election in 2011. Southeast Michigan Synod had elected a Bishop every other year for 8 years, all due to circumstances beyond anyone’s control. “That meant that for my first term, I needed to stay healthy, stay alive, and stay put.” By his second term, Don and members of Synod staff were able to focus on rebuilding connections and reassembling the synod. The RiseUP campaign was a driving force behind bringing congregations together. And now, entering his third term, Don sees his call as one that focuses on helping us find the best and most faithful way to go forward into a time and context that none of us could have imagined five years  ago. “It’s been an interesting ride so far, but I’ve enjoyed it!” he shared. “It has been a blessing to serve.”*Shalom,* |