

“Re-fire-ment” coming in June 2019

+Pastor Larry Strenge, Director for Evangelical Mission

On January 12, 2019 I informed our synod council that, after prayerful discernment, in June 2019 I am planning to conclude my call as our SW MN Synod’s Director for Evangelical Mission (D.E.M.). I have been honored to serve our Lord in this synod since 1988, the last 10 years, since June 2009, as the D.E.M. It’s now time to enter other “callings,” ones that I am naming as “*re-fire-ment*.”

For now, I am grateful. I am grateful to have served here in our synod all of my years as an ordained person (Nov 1987). Especially I’ve enjoyed these last ten alongside Bishop Jon, his staff, and the many people who the Spirit has invited me to walk alongside in this calling, both ordained and lay leaders, who serve our governance, congregations, and organizations in leadership, discipleship and pastoral callings.

Thanks be to God for you! I have learned a lot! And I look forward to our final months together to witness the ways the Spirit is leading into this next chapter for me, for you, and for us as the Body of Christ together in God’s world. I will daily keep this all in by “GPF (Gratitude. Prayer. Fitness) time!”

So “*re-fire-ment*?” It sings more to me than “*re-tire-ment*” for what I believe (and pray!) is ahead!

In this “*re-fire-ment*” calling there will be aspects of “*re-tire-ment*.” I plan to, and am taking action to, live into and grow areas that continue to utilize the gifts and interests the Spirit keeps cultivating in me, what I include below as “part-time callings.”

Mostly I want to continue to grow and live into those vital “full-time callings” God has provided. Those include, but are not limited to--child of God (+), spouse, father, grandparent, sibling, son, citizen, and friend. Those name a few but not all our “daily bread” callings, ones that never wear out or stop growing!

First, I look forward to spending more time with my best friend and wife of 38+ years, Pastor Elizabeth Strenge. Elizabeth has served our Lord as pastor through Celebration Lutheran Church, Sartell, Mn, for 25 years! She recently announced her June 2019 retirement plans. Elizabeth and I plan to travel, grow in our marriage, be more available as grandparents, as well as enjoy our riverside home in the Sartell area.

Next I see my “*re-fire-ment*” being lived out in some part-time callings. Here is some of what I see ahead for me.

First I plan to live more deeply into the practice of [“coaching,”](#) Coaching helps others understand, and live into, their life-callings as God’s children. I like to view our life as followers in the way of Jesus through the lens of generosity, seeing generosity as a discipleship practice we can cultivate and grow to be happier, more joyful, people. To help cultivate and grow this lifestyle I will pursue my certification in [“coaching”](#) with the [International Coaching Federation \(ICF\)](#). Currently I am considered a “trained coach” by Jonathan Reitz, CEO of [CoachNet](#), as well as a Level 2 coach through our ELCA Coach Network. I plan to enhance those skills to “coach” pastors and others in the Spirit’s fruit of generosity ([see Galatians 5:22](#))--as well as in other areas of growth and results gained through coaching.

Additionally I'll work with the [Lake Institute on Faith and Giving](#), part of the Lilly School of Philanthropy to teach and coach generosity. Currently the Lake Institute (and our ELCA) has trained me to teach "**Cultivating Generous Congregations**" (CGC). For example, 12 congregations in our synod have received this CGC training. I plan to continue this CGC teaching work as I am called. Additionally, Keith Mundy, ELCA Stewardship dept chair, has invited me to a smaller role as coordinator of CGC in our ELCA. Finally, the Lake Institute also has a course called the [Executive Certificate in Religious Fundraising](#) (ECRF). This course is one our synod has found helpful to train several pastors in our synod, one that helps us see "fundraising as ministry." ([Henri Nouwen, "A Spirituality of Fundraising"](#)). I hope to "coach" beyond the four day training experience for deeper appreciation and application of this discipleship practice.

Through "*P.I.E. (Prosper-Invest-Endow): A Recipe for Generosity*," a Biblical and story based ministry we developed in our synod since 2012, I also have gained a keen interest in cultivating generosity through planned giving. I will likely do some work with a friend who has an independent philanthropy business, one that works with ministries and non-profits.

Besides all this? The Spirit only knows, "What else?"

I look forward to working with Bishop Jon, his team, and our Churchwide staff as this D.E.M. position is posted in the near future and a new D.E.M. is called to the SW MN Synod.

For now, please keep me/us in your prayers. And feel free to contact me. Through June I would love to work with you or your congregation in areas of "vitality." These include "Invitational Evangelizing," S.O.A.R. planning, or providing a [Congregational Vitality tool](#). Or if you want to cultivate generosity, let's do that through a "P.I.E." presentation!

In short, let's work together. The Spirit is at work! Let's continue to cultivate vitality, evangelizing, and generosity in your life and/or your congregational setting . Until June I'll continue to try to provide resources, including "coaching," for these ministry areas in our SW MN Synod. Contact me at Larry.Strenge@elca.org or via 320-249-1135.



Southwestern Minnesota Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.