



2005: A Synod Joined in Prayer

The Congregational Renewal Team of the Synod Council encourages all congregations to make 2005 the year of "A Synod Joined in Prayer." Please include these congregations in the prayers of the Church, and in your personal prayers.

The complete synod prayer calendar was printed in the November issue of *River Crossings*, and is available on the web at www.semnsynod.org/prayercalendar.html

Nov. 28 (1 Advent): Ascension, Albert Lea; Bethel, Northfield; Aurora, Owatonna; Arendahl, Peterson

Dec. 5 (2 Advent): Bear Creek, Grand Meadow; Bear Lake Concordia, Albert Lea; Cannon River, Welch; Bethlehem, Mankato

Dec. 12 (3 Advent): Bethlehem, Lanesboro; Bethel, Rochester; Bethany, Frost; Christ, Faribault

Dec. 19 (4 Advent): Calvary, Rapidan; Cedar Valley, Houston; Christ, Byron; Bethel, Scarville, Iowa

Dec. 26 (1 Christmas): *Joy to the World!*

Jan. 2 (2 Christmas): Cross of Christ, Welch; Christ the King, Mankato; Central, Winona; East St. Olaf, Byron

Jan. 9 (Baptism of the Lord): Bethlehem, Myrtle; Dale, Kenyon; Epiphany, Eagle Lake; Chatfield, Chatfield

Jan. 16 (2 Epiphany): Evanger, Sargeant; Bricelyn, Bricelyn; Dennison, Dennison; Faith, Janesville

Jan. 23 (3 Epiphany): Christ, Preston; Faith, Dodge Center; Central Freeborn, Albert Lea; Faith, Wabasha

Jan. 30 (4 Epiphany): First, Ellendale; Cross of Christ, Houston; Gloria Dei, Rochester; Community, Geneva

Feb. 6 (Transfiguration of Our Lord): First English, Cannon Falls; First, Hope; Elstad, Peterson; Good Shepherd, Plainview

Also distributed in last month's issue was a poster with the 2005 theme "A Synod Joined in Prayer" on it. If you did not receive a copy, please contact the synod office and request one.

This column will feature prayer ideas, thoughts, and resources in the future. Be sure to seek it out each month!

2005's Prayer Emphasis Kicks Into High Gear

Synod Strategic Plan Highlights, Dec. 2004

The Congregational Renewal Team has been working hard on activities centering around 2005's prayer emphasis. You'll notice in this issue of *River Crossings*, next to this column, there is a new regular feature: a list of congregations to pray for for the next several weeks. The synod web site has all the congregations listed for the next year: www.semnsynod.org/prayercalendar.html.

During the 2004 Fall Theological Conference, the Congregational Renewal Team presented a skit about the prayer emphasis, and passed out sign-up sheets soliciting input for future prayer features in *River Crossings*.

In addition, several prayer-related activities are planned for the 2005 Synod Assembly. Stay tuned for more details!

Other current highlights include:

- **To Be Joyful Witnesses – Natural Church**

Development: Salem Lutheran Church in Albert Lea will begin the Natural Church Development (NCD) process in January, along with five other congregations. NCD is a research-based system for improving congregational health.

- **Communications Emphasis:** To help connect the congregational, synodical, and churchwide expressions of the church, a new bulletin/newsletter insert for congregations debuts this month: "The Bridge." Please feel free to distribute this resource in your congregation's publications. It is designed to be used at any time, and new issues will be included in each issue of *River Crossings* and on the synod web site.

- **To Be Joyful Witnesses – Youth and Family Focus:**

In an effort to raise up and support our youth and young families in the synod, the possibility is being explored of hiring a part-time youth and family ministry person at the synod office. Conversations have been taking place among the BLOChads (Building Lives on Christ – Youth Directors), LACE (Lutheran Association of Christian Educators), and the bishop.

For more information on the synod's strategic plan, visit www.semnsynod.org and click the "Strategic Plan" link on the left.



Called into God's Marvelous Light

To Be Joyful Witnesses

To Be Christ-Centered Disciples

To Be Strong Leaders