

2020 Report of the Northern Illinois Synod diakonia™ Program

NIS diakonia™ operated with six locations in the Synod in 2019-2020: DeKalb (First Lutheran), Dixon (St. Paul), Joliet (St. John), McHenry (Shepherd of the Hills), Mount Carroll (First Lutheran), and Rockford (St. Mark). We are grateful to these congregations and pastors (Janet Hunt, Joseph O'Donnell, Jen Beamsley/Robin Caldwell, Bob Stark, and Tom Rogers) for hosting the program for approximately 30 students this year. Locations managers were Pastors Brant Clements, Ellen Arthur, and Denise Rode, Dr. Trenton Ferro, Don Long, and Barbara Stark. Nancy Lillevold serves as NIS diakonia™ treasurer and Denise Rode as coordinator. Others participating on the NIS steering committee include pastors Douglas Liston (national diakonia™ treasurer), John Seraphine and Kenn Storck (NIS executive director), Bob Stark (communications coordinator), Barb Stark (secretary), and Donna Kelly, diakonia™ graduate. The corps of teaching pastors came from all parts of the Synod.

A highlight of the diakonia™ year was the 2019 graduation held Sunday, July 28 at Salem Lutheran Church in Sycamore (Preston Fields, host pastor). This was a joint graduation with those in the Metropolitan Chicago Synod who had completed their two-year course of study. Twenty-six graduates were honored in a festive service which featured Deacon Cheryl Erdmann as homilist, Ron Vanatta as organist, and Deacon Carla Vanatta as choir director. Great appreciation was expressed to Salem for hosting the service and reception for graduates, their friends, and their families. The 2020 graduation is scheduled for 2 p.m. on Saturday, June 27, at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in Downers Grove, again in conjunction with the Metropolitan Chicago Synod. MCS Bishop Yehiel Curry will be the preacher. All are invited to attend.

One “Beyond diakonia™” course offering was sponsored this year in conjunction with the MCS. Dr. Trenton Ferro taught an ongoing Beginning Greek course which was hosted at Geneva Lutheran Church and First Lutheran Church in Plano. Additional “Beyond diakonia™” courses will be scheduled as interest and resources are available. Intended primarily for graduates of the diakonia™ program, these courses center on topics of special interest or on skill development that would not normally be part of the general diakonia™ curriculum. Contact a steering committee member to see what is being planned for future courses.

The recent coronavirus hiatus on in-person learning emphasized the need for diakonia™ to be offered online in extraordinary circumstances. NIS diakonia™ is exploring the possibility of providing some course work online when warranted.

The national diakonia™ board has engaged Three Roads Consulting to assist in developing a strategic plan for the next step of its journey. Board members from the NIS, including Prs. Doug Liston, Denise Rode, and Kenn Stork, along with Dr. Trenton Ferro, are contributing to this process which is being directed by Pastors Stephen Bouman and David Nelson.

Respectfully submitted,

Denise L. Rode, Chairperson, NIS diakonia™, pastor@immanuelearlville.org,
drode1@niu.edu

