

# I-K Lutheran

## *Where God is doing new things*

March 2018

On Saturday, February 10<sup>th</sup>, sixty young people from across Indiana and Kentucky, accompanied by adult youth ministry leaders, pastors, and deacons, gathered at Pilgrim Lutheran Church, Carmel, IN, for the third annual Bishop's Youth Day. (Another forty who had registered were unable to attend because of weather.) Ranging in age from eighth grade to seniors in high school, this group of young disciples was energetic, engaged, and inspiring.



At worship that day we used the scripture texts for the next day, Transfiguration Sunday. In Mark's telling of the transfiguration story we hear God say, "This is my Son, the beloved; listen to him." As I looked around the room that Saturday in February I also heard God say, "These are my beloved children; listen to them." I am writing to share with you what I heard when I listened. I hope you'll listen, too.

The participants, young people and adults alike, were formed into small groups who rotated through a series of breakout sessions. When they came to mine, I asked them three questions and asked them to record an answer to each on a Post-It note and stick it on the wall: (1) What is an issue that high school students face? (2) What is something that you like about your home congregation? (3) What do you want the church and its leaders, like me, to know or do?

The answers to the first question were both heartbreaking and important to hear: bullying, pressure to achieve, stress, relationship challenges, depression, fear of letting down parents, being accepted, anxiety...As joyful and buoyant as our young people can be, so many of them also struggle with very serious issues and concerns around relationships, belonging and identity, and pressure and stress of many kinds. I also learned that some of them are occasionally ridiculed for being involved in church. I was left wondering, *How might each of us and our congregations pay closer attention to the young people in our midst and in our communities and accompany them with compassionate listening and unconditional welcome, with healing, hope and love?*

Clearly, some of this is already happening in their congregations, our congregations. What do you like about your congregation? "Everyone is nice to everyone and no one judges." "Super friendly." "Welcoming to all." "Our small youth group are good friends." "Dedicated parishioners." "We are family." "Kindness and willingness to help." "The people." "Financial and personal support of youth." "Everything!" Over and over these young disciples testified to the welcome, sense of belonging, and support they receive from you, the people of God gathered as local congregations. This is the foundation for forming young people in faith and they are paying careful attention to how we treat them and others. *Thank you for this important ministry with them.*

Finally, here's a smattering of what they said they want the rest of the church and its leaders to know or do: "Help us know how to live through God at school." "Young people have good ideas, too." "Change can be a good thing." "Church needs to be comfortable with uncertainty." "Be clear that ALL are welcome and live it." "Keep doing more service projects." "Include youth in decision-making." "More learning activities." "More ecumenical activities and service projects." "Remember to have fun." "Give youth more leadership opportunities." "Address social justice issues." "Keep focused on Christ for the world." *There it is, the summary of what our young people want us to know and do: keep focused on Christ for the world.*

In the end, the pile of Post-It notes that I've been carrying around in my briefcase and in my heart since February 10<sup>th</sup> reminds me of this, at least this, and so much more: Our young people are a prophetic presence and voice among us, sisters and brothers. They are God's beloved children; let's listen to them.

*Bishop Bill Gafkjen*



Indiana-Kentucky Synod

# *StewardFest*

Saturday, April 14, 2018  
St. John Lutheran Church  
12523 N. Dearborn Road  
Sunman, IN 47041

Agenda:

8:30am Registration  
9:00am Gathering Worship  
9:15am Plenary with Bishop Gafkjen  
10:15am Break  
10:30am Workshops  
11:30am Workshops  
12:30pm Lunch  
1:15pm Workshops  
2:15pm Break  
2:30pm Mission Ambassador Plenary  
3:15pm Sending Worship

Available Workshops:

Spiritual Gifts  
Personal Finance  
Treasurer Training  
Ministry Funding Plan  
Lasting Life Partnerships  
Care of Creation Ministry  
Congregational Stewardship  
Self Care/Family/Relationships

