

Greetings!

It is a privilege to serve as your Candidacy and Leadership Manager (CaLM) for Region 5 of the ELCA, a call I began in January 2026. This synod, along with eleven others, makes up the whole of Region 5, which covers Illinois, Iowa, Wisconsin, and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Collegiality is important to the region. The bishops, synod staff, and other synod leaders gather in various ways throughout the year, including online check-ins and an annual retreat for bishops and synod staff. These connecting points provide space for idea-sharing, mutual support, and partnerships that help ministry across the region to thrive. The 2025 Bishop and Staff Retreat took place in Middleton, WI and provided time for worship, learning sessions, affinity groups, and collaboration. This gathering is a vital part of our regional ministry, offering opportunities in formal and informal settings for both bishops and synod staffs to share wisdom and build relationships.

In addition, the twelve bishops and the CaLM form the regional steering committee, whose work it is to dream and vision new ways for our synods to partner together. One of the outcomes of this visioning is a three-year collaborative boundaries education cycle, including the topics of professional boundaries, gender justice, and racial justice. The cycle began in 2024 with professional boundaries and continued in 2025 with gender justice. In this third year we will gather as a region on November 5 for learning around racial justice and boundaries. This event brings together between 800 and 1000 rostered ministers at approximately 40 sites around the region.

The CaLM also works with candidacy committees from all twelve synods. Together we walk alongside individuals who are discerning a call to rostered ministry. I am impressed by the faithful ways each committee works to ensure those who seek a vocation within the church are equipped for the demands and joys that ministry offers. In addition, once candidates move into the first call process, it is part of my work to convene the regional first call consultations, at which the bishops and staff work diligently to match the gifts and needs of candidates with the gifts and needs of the church.

Our region also manages archival records, which are housed at Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, IA. Sue Dodd is the regional archivist. Her work includes receiving documents and artifacts from congregations as well as responding to inquiries regarding the information contained within those documents. Sue also serves as a resource to congregations, particularly throughout the holy closure process, in determining which documents are important to preserve. Her work is a loving combination of preserving institutional knowledge and the history and stories of the congregations in our region.

It is a privilege to serve with and among you. I look forward to learning more about your synod and the work you are doing to share the love of Christ with your communities and the world.

In Christ,

Rev. Jen Christenson, Candidacy and Leadership Manager, Region 5 – ELCA

Sue Dodd, Region 5 Archivist