



# THE BRIDGE

*A Monthly Resource from the Southeastern Minnesota Synod*



## **AN INTERVIEW WITH REV. ALLY BOWMAN ABOUT FIRST CALL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION**

### **IN YOUR OWN WORDS, WHAT IS FIRST CALL THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION (FCTE)?**

First Call Theological Education is a way in which first call pastors become connected to a colleague group that includes fellowship, education, and mentorship. The relationships developed between first call pastors, their mentors, and the synod staff ease the transition from being a student/intern to being an ordained member of the ELCA and this particular synod.

### **WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR MOST MEMORABLE/MEANINGFUL FCTE EXPERIENCES?**

I've really enjoyed having a cohort that meets for monthly check-ins. I find this time to be very valuable as I'm able to both share my own joys and concerns as well as listen to the joys and concerns of my colleagues. I also found the retreats to be very helpful as I work to become a spiritually resilient leader. It was out of one of these retreats that myself and three other young, first-call, woman pastors started a "Covenant Group" that meets monthly to engage in learning, spiritual direction, and fellowship.

### **YOU STARTED YOUR CALL AT ST. PAUL, LECENTER ABOUT A YEAR AND A HALF AGO. WHAT HAVE BEEN SOME OF YOUR GREATEST JOYS ABOUT SERVING IN THIS ROLE?**

Being a raging extrovert, I've loved getting to know the people in this community of faith as well as in the greater Le Center community. I've been able to learn more about the church and the town through visiting with different people. Some of my greatest joys have been with the youth of our congregation, which aligns with the fact that my undergraduate degree is in Youth & Family Ministry. We've had a lot of fun (and challenges) learning together during confirmation classes, volunteering at VBS, dreaming about opening a coffee shop in town, and more!

### **IS THERE ANYTHING YOU'D LIKE THE PEOPLE THE SYNOD TO KNOW ABOUT THE CHALLENGES OF BEING A NEW ROSTERED MINISTER?**

As one who moved into a smaller town community, fellowship outside of the church community has been a challenge. It's this interesting and intricate balance of being pastor to the church and to the community as well as being a community member. It's particularly challenging when there aren't many people your age in town. Part of it is moving to a new town and part of it is balancing your first call with your social life, family life, etc. I appreciate the way this community has invited me to be active in the community -- that's how I joined a recreational volleyball team (with some church members)!

### **HOW DOES FCTE HELP STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT YOU AS A NEW PASTOR IN THE SYNOD?**

Seeing as one of the toughest challenges is staying connected (especially when you find yourself in a rural context), I really appreciate how FCTE helps connect me with other first call pastors, with mentors, and with the synod staff. These are the people I turn to when I have questions or need to verbally process something. I also appreciate the retreats as a time of intentional learning and rest. It's so easy to over-schedule and over-work ourselves, so the time of retreat is wonderful and rejuvenating.

### **WHY DO YOU THINK FCTE IS IMPORTANT?**

I believe FCTE programming is important to my leadership development because I still have a lot to learn. Seminary prepares you for first call through classes, internship, CPE, etc., but there's no way that a 4-year program can teach you EVERYTHING about everything. And because there is such a diversity of gifts within our synod and our church, we get a chance to learn about a variety of topics through FCTE programming. We are lifelong learners and I appreciate how the synod helps us on that journey.