

## Our Ecumenical Partners

by Bishop Shelley Wickstrom

Our synod enjoys a partnership with the Presbytery of the Yukon (Presbyterian Church USA), the Alaska Conference (United Methodist Church) and the Alaska Diocese of The Episcopal Church. Together we've had a formal partnership called PLUME. That partnership of judicatories and our MatSu congregations provided the funding for a mission developer for our four denominations along the Parks Highway and into Sutton. The ecumenical commitment of the MatSu area congregations continues in a variety of ways.



Last week, I joined the Alaska Conference of the UMC in their annual convention. How good it felt to thank them for their partnership in being Christ's body in Alaska. Our four denominations stepped forward to do a new thing when UMC Pastor Robert Hicks was selected as a mission developer for our four denominations. He was trained by the ELCA Mission Developers School and filled out ELCA reports. He preached and presided at Trapper Creek Lutheran, Willow UMC and coached a group forming a PLUME-ish faith community in Sutton. This was a rich way we have together worked for the common good.

Congregations across this state partner with congregations of other denominations to offer Vacation Bible School. Thank you for offering a witness to Christ who we seek to serve and in whose name we gather. Many congregations of different denominations support their local food pantry. Christ Lutheran in Soldotna received an ELCA Hunger Grant to support the food pantry they contribute to at Soldotna United Methodist Church and they sponsored a grant request that funded the Kenai Peninsula Food Bank's raised bed project.

Our denominations share the same challenges in providing robust adult education in this state. Working together, we can expand our teaching resources and our participant pool. When I mentioned this to the Methodists, they were more excited than even we Lutherans were at our assembly.

Learning what it means to be a trauma-informed church is a challenge ahead for all of us. As ACEs education spreads across our state through state and local efforts, we will share in how this will inform congregational and pastoral ministry. I hope you read the first part of a six-part series Jan Adasiak has written for the synod in the last e-news and that you'll read Part Two in this e-news.

The Presbyterian Church USA sent their national leaders to Utqiagvik last spring where they presented the repudiation of the Doctrine of Discovery. Our synod and churchwide joined the nation-wide movement to repudiate this doctrine in 2016. This healing event in Utqiagvik was accompanied by training on Alaska-specific historical trauma and resilience. My hope is that we as a synod will share in that training with our partners.