

Accepting the call to serve



At first Linden Olson thought, “Oh my goodness, I don’t think I can do that. Someone else can do it better.”

But after awhile he realized, “If my pastor thinks I can do it, I guess I could give it a try.”

Linden’s pastor had invited him to serve on his synod’s candidacy committee. Now, more than 30 years later, he still sits on the same committee in the ELCA Southwestern Minnesota Synod.

“Sometimes people don’t recognize what gifts and talents they have,” said Linden, who is a farmer and pork

producer in Worthington, Minnesota. “So they might need a little nudge. Hopefully, they can then discover they are quite capable, and (the realization) can lead to wider service.”

And that’s what happened to Linden. In addition to volunteering in his congregation, American Lutheran Church, where he and his wife are members, Linden is also on the board of Luther Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota, and recently wrapped up his work with the task force on the ELCA genetics social statement. It was approved as the ELCA’s 11th social statement by the 2011 Churchwide Assembly.

“I came away with a profound appreciation for the task force members, the ELCA churchwide staff and the task force writing team,” Linden said. “Here was a diverse group of people who were very willing to listen, respect, understand and try to find a common language that would reflect their viewpoints, yet be able to produce a document that would be quite valuable, not only to the ELCA, but also to the general public.”

Looking back, Linden says he is glad of the decision he made years ago to volunteer on behalf of this church. “It doesn’t make a difference if it’s teaching Sunday school, working for a community food shelf or working for Habit for Humanity,” he says. “Once you combine an interest with a gift, serving can be very gratifying and rewarding.”



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