

# Statement of Vision for the Presidency of the NJ District

**Rev. Stephen Gewecke**

The practical expression of District faces in two directions. From the Synodical perspective a District is “Synod in this place.” As such the District is an extension of the Synod or the local presence of the Synod among us. However, from the front steps of your church, District will have a different look. Congregations desire District to be a source of identity and unity, a means of accountability, a resource in times of need, and perhaps even a source of inspiration.

To this end, we would do well to work on fostering an ever greater sense of unity among us. The Scriptures talk about us being the family or household of God. We certainly find that expressed in our congregations. We regularly turn to one another for fellowship, care, and encouragement. Yet doesn’t this identity extend beyond our congregations to our District, Synod, and even all of Christ’s Church? We would do well, not only to speak of this truth but, to practice it. We would do well to intentionally foster collegiality among our pastors in learning communities, circuit meetings, and pastor’s conferences. Our congregations will only find a healthy and positive identity in District as our pastors bear this attitude in themselves and their ministry. Then leaders and members of our congregations can begin to catch and take up this identity.

It would also serve us well to work on communications between our congregations and the District. A number of years ago there was a Districtwide event that greatly impacted me. It revealed that people loved and deeply cared about their District. The passion was palpable. But at the same time there was a high level of frustration among them regarding the relationship between congregations and District. People felt disconnected from the District. That dialog was strangely encouraging to me because the beginning of change is to be found in unrest. Since that time we have made strides toward greater connectedness but still more may be done. Through congregational visitation, information sharing sessions with lay leaders, training sessions, celebrations, and keen responsiveness in communication, we can continue to build goodwill and joy in our relationship of congregation and District.

Third, we will want to look to reap the benefits of an emphasis on increasing the vitality and health of our congregations and District. Efforts to begin new ministry and plant new congregations has begun among us through the Kairos Network. We will want to encourage and support this work. At the same time, we will want to encourage the vitality of all our existing congregations. New models of partnership in ministry can be explored to foster, strengthen, and invigorate the proclamation of the gospel in every corner of New Jersey. We will also want to place an emphasis on revitalizing our District Councils to help foster the work of our congregations. In particular, we can endeavor to reconstitute the work of the Outreach and Congregational Services Councils which have been virtually dormant in recent years.

May our heavenly Father grant us his grace to continue the proclamation of the gospel here in NJ and enable us by his Holy Spirit to be strong and bold on behalf of Jesus Christ.