



Upstate New York Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Annual Report to
Congregations 2014

*Behold, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth I tell you of them." Isaiah 42:9*



NEW BISHOP INSTALLED On September 6 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Rochester a slight breeze stirred long, thin red streamers and reminded the people attending the installation of the Rev. John S. Macholz as Bishop of the Upstate New York Synod that the Holy Spirit was present. The Spirit's presence was felt in the preaching and worship leadership of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, the soaring notes of the choir and brass ensemble, the presence and prayers of ecumenical leaders and guests, and the sense that both Bishop Macholz and the synod as a whole were called to embark on a new journey together.

The service was filled with world-class music led by Dr. Jim Jeffris and Mr. Thatcher D. Lyman, gifted musicians, who led the people in compositions both ancient and contemporary. The final blessing, entitled "Peace I Leave With You" was composed by Jonathan Thomas Madden, son of Synod VP, Thomas Madden. The installation portion began with a choral prayer composed by Dr. Paul O. Manz, noted composer, organist, and professor at Christ Seminary-Seminex, where Bishop Macholz earned his Master's of Divinity.

Bishop Macholz was presented the pectoral cross of the Synod and a crozier, symbols of the office of bishop, by former Bishop Marie Jerge. The cross is as a reminder to serve Christ and his people, and the crozier reminds all that the bishop also serves as a shepherd, called to keep watch over the whole flock. From beginning to end, the service was fitting for beginning of a new chapter in the life of the Upstate New York Synod.



Going Public:
Poured Out
for the World

THE 27th ASSEMBLY OF THE UPSTATE NEW YORK SYNOD



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2014 Synod Assembly, "Going Public: Poured Out for the World," was a

time to dwell in our baptism and explore the gift of the Holy Spirit given at our baptism and how it moves us into mission. The most prominent task, electing a bishop, greatly relied on the guidance of the Holy Spirit with prayer, careful listening and discussion, Bible study, and discerning the Spirit's voice. The Rev. John S. Macholz was elected bishop of the Upstate New York Synod on the fifth ballot. Addressing the assembly he said, "This election is for the whole church and how we go forward in God's Holy Spirit, proclaiming the gospel. I ask for your prayers as we begin a new phase in the life of our church." Leading the assembly in a standing ovation he gave thanks to Bishop Jerge for all she has brought to the office and the church. Bishop Jerge spoke, using calla lily bulbs, thanked the assembly for all that had blossomed through her time as bishop, noting that there are seasons of blooming and seasons of rest. She gave Bishop-elect Macholz a gift of those same bulbs, as "symbols of the new life and promise that is yet to come."

NEW SYNOD OFFICES—We relocated to new offices at 5811 Heritage Landing Drive, 1st Floor, E. Syracuse, NY 13057-9360 on Oct. 15. We give thanks for the prayers and volunteers who helped us transition. The location, owned by the Synod of the Northeast, Presbyterian Church USA, offers possibilities for ecumenical partnership.



God's Work, Our Hands Day On Sept. 7, 2014 hundreds of volunteers from across the synod joined in preparing thousands of meals, handing out free hot dogs and nearly 100 bags of groceries, flood mucking, and new construction of walls saturated from 2013 and 2014 floods. A multitude of mission work was accomplished.



CONGREGATIONAL VITALITY ASSESSMENT in UPSTATE NEW YORK

Our Synod is one of five across the ELCA piloting the “Congregational Vitality Assessment.” Our Regional Renewal Teams together with our DEM have done groundbreaking work on this process, designed to accompany congregational renewal. This renewal can take many forms—as part of a larger process of evaluation, mission planning to identify renewal readiness and focus areas, using the strengths of the congregation to address challenges. We are seeing patterns across the Synod that will help identify the Regional Renewal teams’ work with congregations going forward.

Over half of the congregations in the UNY Synod have used this instrument! There is still time—our DEM is working with the national CVA group toward launching version three of the CVA in February/ March. There is still no charge for taking the CVA—this is another example of your mission support that returns to your congregation! Many thanks to our Regional Renewal team leaders for their great work with our congregations on the Congregational Vitality Assessment in our Synod.

*We give thanks for Lord's love and guidance
as we move into our future.*

Congregational Giving—We give thanks for all our faithful congregations who maintained or increased their financial commitments this year. Sadly, November 30, 2014 YTD income is \$44,267 behind the 2013 comparable time period. Mission giving in all but one of our 7 conferences is down compared to 2013.

- 48.5% of congregations are at or ahead of 2013 – down 6% from last year,
- 33.1% are behind, and
- 18.8% gave no mission support—up 5.5% from last year.

2015 is on the horizon and will again bring financial challenges including another increase in health care costs. Our new office location helps us realize a small cost savings. Only with each congregation’s commitment to mission support can we continue to proclaim God’s good news, grow disciples, do justice, support missionaries, seminaries, faith formation, ecumenical relationships, new mission starts and so much more. Be sure to submit your 2015 mission commitment by year end!

New Rostered Leaders—Six new calls were issued to rostered leaders. Two persons were ordained to Word and Sacrament ministry.

Two more full communion partners are now serving ELCA Congregations.

19 lay and clergy leaders served on Mission in Transition Teams (MIT) in 9 congregations.

One pastor entered the ELCA from Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS).

One congregation entered the ELCA from LCMS. One pastor was approved to enter the ELCA from the United Methodist Church (UMC)



NEW SYNOD COUNCIL

A smaller and more flexible Synod Council was voted in to office. The new Council gathered in June at Notre Dame Retreat Center for an orientation time along with the Conference Deans and Synod Staff. We give thanks for these new strong leaders, who are now serving our synod.



Feed the Roots of Leadership



The Feed the Roots of Leadership capital campaign, raising over \$750,000 to fund outdoor and campus ministries and seminary education, wraps up at the end of 2014. Although total donations were smaller than hoped, the appeal raised valuable dollars for new seminarians, campus ministry for new students looking for a faith community while at college and support for our outdoor ministries. The campaign was a step of faith in building a foundation to continue the development of our future lay and clergy missional leaders of the church.