



Upstate New York Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
 God's work. Our hands.

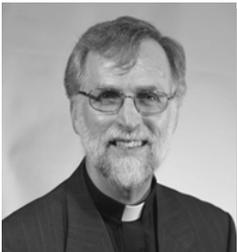
Annual Report to
Congregations
2016

Constitution Changes Adopted at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly

At the 2016 Churchwide Assembly voting members adopted a number of amendments to the constitutions of all three expressions of the church – churchwide, synods and congregations. Most of the amendments apply to required provisions of our constitutions and relate to the merging of the three lay rosters into a roster of Ministers of Word and Service. The synod has already begun the process of revising its constitution for adoption by the 2017 Synod Assembly.



Our synod Constitution Committee invites all congregations to review and update their constitutions by our 2018 Synod Assembly (June 3 - 5, 2018). None of the amendments are automatically effective. They will need to be adopted by each congregation in accordance with C16.04. of the 2016 amendments, referenced as C17.04 in your current constitution. The committee is prepared to review your constitutions expediently so that you are able to then move forward to adoption at congregation meetings. Committee members will also be available at the 2017 Synod Assembly for consultation. Our hope is that all congregations in the Upstate New York Synod will have synod approved updated constitutions by January 2019. The 2016 Model Constitution for Congregations and a FAQ document can be downloaded from the synod website.



Rev. David Preisinger

BISHOP'S CONVOCATION

By Rev. David Preisinger
 Assistant to the Bishop

How is worship transformative? How structured are we in our worship? Can we leave room for the Spirit? How do we learn who our neighbors are and how to serve and love them? These and others were questions that sparked some inter-

esting discussion at the March 4, 2016 annual Bishop's Convocation, held at St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Camillus. Rev. Kevin Strickland, assistant to Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and Executive for Worship for the ELCA, was our presenter.

Kevin engaged the approximately 90 people present in conversation around the Use of the Means of Grace. There was small group discussion, interaction in the large group, some video presentations and hymn singing. The hymns, some were new to many of us, contained words with powerful messages of God active in our World.

The 2017 Convocation will be at Luther Memorial in N. Syracuse on March 25, our speaker will be Marcus Lohrmann, retired bishop of the Northwestern Ohio synod.



Rev. Marcus Lohrmann

New Directions—G4

In early November Bishop Macholz and Rev. Malfatti, DEM, began visiting each of the seven conferences to spend time in conversation gathered around four salient points that will drive our ministry as a synod and congregations (as a church together) for the coming years.

These points are:

- Grounded in Christ Jesus.
- Growing in our witness.
- Giving of our bounty.
- Graced for the sake of the world.

Gatherings continue through May 2017 as we ask questions like, "Where do we find our grounding and how do we grow in our understanding of what that means?" Returning to Scripture, the confessions and the Small Catechism, among other sources, will give language for us to use in our communicating the good news of God in Christ Jesus. Conversations will be lively and enlightening as we gather together to grow in faith and understanding of God's work in our midst and this world. More information will be forthcoming in future editions of "The Upstate Update" as well as other means. Please include this process in your prayers in the coming months.

FOUR NEW DEANS JOIN SYNOD STAFF IN 2016

The conference dean can be described as the conduit between the rostered leaders and congregations of their conference and the Bishop. A call to this office is above and beyond a primary call. They are supportive of the synod's mission, appreciating it and understanding it as a spiritual leader. They are sometimes placed in the midst of anxious systems, remaining calm and exhibiting leadership and the ability to swim through the muddy waters of chaos and change.



*Rev. Lee Miller II
Niagara Frontier Conference*

When a rostered leader or congregation needs assistance, their first call should always be to their dean. They speak on behalf of the Bishop. A dean maintains confidentiality and possesses the ability to help as needed as well as when to request assistance from synod staff and/or the Bishop.



*Rev. Laura Daly
Southern Tier
Conference*



*Rev. Zach LaBagh
Foothills Conference*

“As a newly appointed Interim Dean for the Foothills Conference, I am looking forward to ways in which I can serve our conference in a new way. To engage the pastors, congregations and communities, in seeking God’s mission for all of us. This seems overwhelming as I also serve as pastor of 2 churches, but I trust in God’s call and work with the gifts I have been given. As an Interim this allows the conference and myself to discern God’s call for the future and to see where God is leading us as we seek to elect a Dean this April.”

“Staying connected and learning to see each other is vital to how we serve the Gospel in this conference. My favorite part of being Interim Dean is learning how we all got here and where we see God taking us forward together in all sorts of new configurations. Supporting colleagues, supporting seminarians and candidates for ministry, supporting deacons, and supporting our lay leaders who work so hard to bring new vitality in places dragged down by conflict and anxiety, all means learning to listen to where God is already working outside of what we recognize as the church, to see where we can show up in the wider world for ministry and for re-creation. “



*Pr. Tara
Eastman*
*Rev. Andrew Nelson
Hudson Mohawk
Conference*

New Rostered Leaders—

Six new calls were issued to rostered leaders. Two persons were ordained to Word and Sacrament ministry. Three more full communion partners are now serving ELCA congregations for a total of 7 serving our congregations. 13 lay and clergy leaders served on Mission in Transition Teams (MIT) for 5 congregations (one team of three are serving two congregations).



Pr. Tara Eastman

Ministry of Word and Service Roster Effective January 1, 2017

By Patsy Glista, Associate in Ministry



*Mrs. Patsy
Glista*

Fifteen voting members from our synod, including Bishop John Macholz and our synod vice president Tom Madden, traveled to New Orleans in August to represent you at the 2016 Churchwide Assembly, "Freed and Renewed in Christ: 500 Years of God's Grace in Action." Amidst amazing worship, community service activities, and fellowship, the 945 voting members in attendance acted on a number of key actions.

One of the actions most significant for me as an Associate in Ministry was the approval of the Ministry of Word and Service roster. Beginning Jan. 1, 2017, ELCA associates in ministry, deaconesses and diaconal ministers will be a single, unified roster of Ministry of Word and Service and be called deacons. The accompanying constitutional amendments related to the roster were also considered and approved by the assembly including a transition in language from 'ordained ministers' to Ministers of Word and Sacrament.

This action was the culmination of decades of prayerful discussion and discernment. The Rev. William O. Gafkjen, bishop of the ELCA Indiana-Kentucky Synod, chair of the ELCA Conference of Bishops and co-chair of the Word and Service task force said that "we are now poised to move forward even more faithfully, energetically and creatively in being church for the sake of the world in the name and way of Jesus," adding "I can imagine all sorts of new and creative possibilities for pastors and deacons working and leading side by side, each with their own particular gifts and call, in addressing the missional needs of the church as we walk together into God's unfolding future."

As our synod journeys and continues growing in faith, I too, can imagine new and creative ways for pastors and deacons and our congregations to work together.

Stewardship/Mission Renewal

Rev. Norma Malfatti, Director for Evangelical Mission/Assistant to the Bishop

Throughout this past year our four Regional Renewal Tables and the synod Stewardship Table have been doing some amazing work and creative things are happening in our congregations across the synod.

Stewardship Table

The Synod Stewardship Table is offering the Generosity Project (a half day, interactive, intergenerational experience about being God's generous people – to learn more contact Denise Ballou or Pr. Norma Malfatti, Director of Evangelical Mission). Early in the year the teams of two from the Stewardship Table began visiting congregation councils and stewardship committees. The purpose of these visits is simply to connect with congregations, thank them for their ministry and offer support. The Stewardship Table is eager to hear your stories, and your concerns, and be of help with your stewardship ministries. At the heart of the Stewardship Table's work is the deep belief that we are called to live with Jesus at the center of our lives. They want to help every congregation thrive in sharing God's love, using all of the gifts, relationships and vocations God blesses us with, and remain Christ centered communities of faith. This work will continue in 2017. If you would like members of the Stewardship Table to visit your congregation, please contact Rev. Paula Roulette (Holy Trinity, Skaneateles), convener of the Synod's Stewardship Table at 716.474.7556 (roulettepe@aol.com) or Pr. Norma at 315.299.4955 (nmalfatti@upstatenynod.org).



*Rev. Norma
Malfatti*

New Congregations and Mission Experiments

The Regional Renewal Tables have been at work preparing ways to help congregations use their CVA results to see "what's next." It's not too late to take the Congregational Vitality Assessment visit <http://congregationalvitalitysurvey.com/> to learn more and if you would like to take the survey, contact your Dean. Alongside the work of helping congregations be faithful in mission and discern the future God is calling them to, the Tables have worked to support new and renewing congregations in several locations across the synod.

Bishop's Annual Golf

Tournament 2016



Karen Eadon

Monday, July 11th was a gorgeous day for life and for golf! Approximately forty eight golfers gathered along with a dozen or so volunteers at Shadow Lake Golf and Racquet Club in Penfield, NY, just east of Rochester.

A Shot Gun start at noon sent folks off to chase a little white ball around acres and acres of grass and trees and woods and ponds. When the golf was over about seventy folks gathered for a delicious dinner, fellowship and raffle to end the day.

A total of \$4,598.01 was raised for the Bishop's Appeal that will go toward creating a funding source to help pay down student debt for those graduating from seminary. The fund will continue to grow in the coming year (and into the future) via gifts given by individuals and congregations and then begin to be distributed as needed.

Thanks to Keith Nickoloff who chaired the event along with Tom Johnson, Greg May, Karen Eadon and Patsy Glista.

There were many volunteers who assisted from start to finish who are to be commended and thanked. First, second and third place prizes were awarded as were Longest Ball and Closest to the Pin.

All in all it was a fun day that helped raise money for a worthwhile cause as it brought people together from around the synod (Central Cross Roads, Genesee Finger Lakes, Niagara Frontier and Southwest Conferences) to play and gather for fellowship.

Next year's date is already set at Shadow Lake again for July 24th. Mark your calendars now and come out and join the fun!



Rev. Mary Johnson

Several congregations in our synod are partnering with the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia to have their needs for pastoral leadership met in innovative ways. One new model of formation for rostered ministry is a program LTSP calls the "Accelerated Co-op" pathway, which allows for a congregation to be served part-time by a student (known as a vicar or intern), while he or she completes the necessary theological education and formation at the seminary. Experienced supervising pastors work together with these teaching congregations and with seminary in the education and formation process. Distributed Learning, which combines on-line course work with occasional week-long intensive classes and formation on campus, makes it possible for congregations in our synod to be part of this venture. The program is "accelerated" because the time required for completing the Master of Divinity degree is shortened to three years by the student learning by being immersed in ministry. The program is "cooperative" because the generous contribution of the sponsoring congregation toward the cost of the seminary education greatly reduces the financial burden on the student serving in that congregation. For certain select congregations and candidates, this pathway provides an exciting opportunity.

A few other congregations in our synod have been served by candidates in the TEEM program. Theological Education for Emerging Ministries is an alternative program of preparation for the ministry of Word and Sacrament. It is available for select congregations and candidates in particular contexts and also provides formation through Distributed Learning. Congregations and candidates must be identified by the bishop and approved by the ELCA for the TEEM program.

Lutheran Campus Ministry



Bishop John Macholz

We are blessed, as a synod, to have five different campus ministry sites to support! They stretch from Buffalo to Rochester to Syracuse to Ithaca to Albany. Each of them is unique in character and ministry carried out on the various campuses. Each is equally critical to the work we do as the church in this synod as they offer places for building community, allowing questions and conversation and sharing in Word and Sacrament Ministry.

This fall I met with leadership from each of the sites in order to discuss funding sources and streams and how to increase financial commitment on the part of the synod as well as within conferences in which the ministries are located. After extensive conversation we moved toward equalizing contributions from the synod and asked how we might expand contributions. In light of that conversation we agreed to designate the first Sunday in October as Campus Ministry Sunday. The narratives of the ministry in each conference will be shared and an offering received by those congregations wishing to participate and offer their support. You'll be hearing more about this mid-year 2017.

In the meantime please keep this ministry in your prayers. It helps to raise up leaders for the church as well as offer continued opportunities for learning and growth in life and in faith.