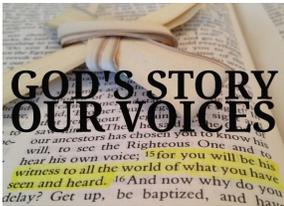


Upstate New York Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

A REPORT FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE Conference Assembly - Fall 2015

"... you are to be a key witness to everyone you meet of what you've seen and heard." Acts 22:15



"I Love to Tell the Story" was sung out by all gathered at the 2015 Synod Assembly when we gathered around the theme God's Story, Our Voices.

Bishop Macholz continues to invite us to share our faith stories and the places where we see God in our daily lives. Congregations across the synod are invited to share God stories for inclusion in the Upstate Update. Together we are the voices of God's story in the world. Together we are the church! Submissions may be sent to Mitch Woite, mwoite@upstatensynod.org. They will be used as received and space allows.



Support the Bishop's Appeal for Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia

37-38 "Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. Don't condemn those who are down; that hardness can boomerang. Be easy on people; you'll find life a lot easier. Give away your life; you'll find life given back, but not merely given back—given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity."

Luke 6:37-38 *The Message*

In past years we have held Bishop's Appeals to raise additional income for the mission proposal. Going forward this annual appeal will go toward a specific ministry, this year it's our seminary in Philadelphia. A number of years ago we reduced our gift to LTSP from \$30,000 to \$5,000. Since then the seminary, along with all of our seminaries in the ELCA have been undergoing redesign and renewal even in the face of decreasing income. The work that the seminaries do in conjunction with synods in raising up leaders is critical to our mission as the church.



Please prayerfully consider a gift to this appeal, large or small. Don't think about numbers, think about thankfulness for all that God has done for you. Remember pastors and leaders who made a difference in your life and gave you hope and direction. Offer a gift, that we may continue to raise up leaders in our midst through our giving. Each and every dollar given will go to the Seminary in Philadelphia. We are church together!

Justice Resolutions Addressed at 2015 Synod Assembly

As a result of resolutions passed at Assembly, a Racism Work Team was convened over the summer. The Team shares the following from their conversations:



- Synod adoption of Racial Justice as a priority for conversation and action;
- Focus in each conference prior to 2016 Synod Assembly on racial justice and white privilege.
- Each conference identifies point person(s) for racial justice and white privilege discussions;
- Identify an all-synod read book that addresses some aspect of this topic;
- Creation of a congregational resource packet and year-long process to talk about racial justice and white privilege within congregations;
- Inclusion at 2016 Synod Assembly speakers and discussion about issues of racial justice and white privilege;
- Resources made available on synod website.

The Upstate New York Synod is one of 12 synods chosen by ELCA Churchwide to participate in a four year Natural Systems Academy engagement with family systems theory, theology and clinical work.



The Academy will prepare our synod's appointed staff lead, Rev. Greg Tennermann, to promote congregational well-being through the means and lens of family systems thinking. Goals of this new venture include—

- Develop and implement a plan to address ministry challenges faced in congregations;
- Recruit and develop a synod team of 10 – 12 individuals prepared in family systems who are able to take the systems approach on the road and work with our congregations and congregational leaders.

Watch for more information as the program rolls out.

Growing Stewards

Responding to the conversation at Synod Assembly and knowing that God pours out abundant gifts and blessings on God's church and the world, the Stewardship Table is reforming to better help congregations harness these gifts for the sake of the world. The definition of Stewardship the Table uses is *the faithful managing of God's gifts in life with Jesus at the center*. Put another way, the role of stewardship is to help individuals and congregations grow in their relationship with Jesus in a way that uses the gifts entrusted to them by God. The Stewardship Table is eager and willing to help you grow as a steward by leading workshops or conversation around holistic stewardship and direct congregations to resources (i.e. books, materials, etc.). The Table will continue to morph and grow as they receive feedback and requests from congregations and leaders.

Our Synod also has three stewardship coaches. They serve by meeting virtually with two people every 4-6 weeks for approximately 9 months. During the 75 minute coaching sessions the coach guides conversation with "coachees" by asking questions to assist the coachee in growing in his or her own understanding of being a steward and develop an action plan for helping the ministry they serve grow stewards as well. If you are interested in being coached or would like to be a coach, please contact Rev. Norma Malfatti, Director for Evangelical Mission (nmalfatti@upstatenysynod.org).

Upstate New York Synod Welcomed New Staff

The Rev. Norma Malfatti, formerly Pastor at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Vestal, NY was called to serve as the next Director of Evangelical Mission of the Upstate New York Synod. The unanimous first choice of all those involved in the interview process, Pr. Norma began her work among us on August 1 and has quickly begun learning about our congregations and meeting with our Mission Renewal and Stewardship Tables.



Mitch Woite also joined our staff in August as the new part-time Communications Associate. In collaboration with the synod's Communication Strategy Team the associate will seek to enhance synod communication, facilitate congregations in growing their communication technology usage and keep us informed as to how we are the church together. He will also maintain and update our synod website, enhance our social media usage and develop printed materials.



SYNOD COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Our Synod Council took the following actions over the summer months—

- ◇ The purchase of 2 vehicles—1 for DEM and 1 for the Bishop;
- ◇ Appointment of Churchwide voting member as a liaison for any conference not having a voting member;
- ◇ To share the Partnering for Mission booklet with all congregations;
- ◇ Approved use of Wellness funds for 2015 Natural Systems costs and LDR training event;
- ◇ Adopted Synod Council Covenant;
- ◇ Approved synod's participation in JumpStart with our Episcopal partners; and
- ◇ Adopted resolution from Racial Justice Work Team.

Stay connected with your synod. Find events, receive updates on healthcare, assembly and get the latest announcements. Sign up for the Upstate Update—visit <http://upstatenysynod.org>, scroll down the right side and enter your email address today. The synod also includes resources and articles in *The Lutheran* magazine quarterly. The synod subscription plan is available at \$3.95 per subscription and includes the issues with our inserts.