



# Upstate New York Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## A REPORT FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE Conference Assembly - Fall 2016

"[Christ] creates in himself one new humanity...thus making peace..." Ephesians 2:15b



### **Bishop's Appeal 2016-2017**

By Bishop John Macholz

The annual Bishop's Appeal is an opportunity for the Bishop to choose an organization or entity and support it through gifts that are received through the annual golf tournament as well as contributions sent in by individuals. Last year the Bishop's Appeal raised a little over \$4100 that was sent to the Lutheran School of Theology at Philadelphia. This year the funds are being used to create a fund that will assist seminary graduates pay down their student loan responsibilities.

In order to assist as many folks as possible in a short period of time, it was decided to continue the same focus for the 2017 Bishop's Appeal. Between now and the end of next year, we will continue to invite contributions to the fund as well as dedicate the proceeds from next July 24<sup>th</sup>'s golf tournament toward the total. In the meantime the Finance Team and Synod Council will formulate a method for receiving requests from the fund as well as disbursing funds to help pastors offset their debt load. If you have not yet contributed and are willing to do so a check can be made out and sent to the synod office to add to the fund. The check can be made out to Upstate New York Synod with Student Debt written in the memo line and sent to: Upstate New York Synod, 5811 Heritage Landing Drive, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, East Syracuse, NY 13057.

**A note about seminary debt.** In a study completed in 2013, student debt for those graduation seminary averaged \$41,245. 84 percent of students carried that level of debt. This is the average indebtedness incurred by ELCA M. Div. Students. Note that this is average, indicating some have less and some more. I am personally aware of two individuals who are presently carrying over \$100,000 each and have sense that they will never be able to pay the loans off.

**Help us reach \$10,000 by January 31, 2017**

### **Churchwide Assembly adopts amendments to the Model Constitution for Congregations of the ELCA**

by Patsy Glista, AIM



Voting members of the Churchwide Assembly adopted a number of amendments to the constitutions of all three expressions of the church – churchwide, synods and congregations. None of these amendments are automatically effective but will need to be adopted by each congregation in accordance with C16.04. of the 2016 amendments, currently referenced as C17.04 in your current constitution if it has been updated to the 2013 Model Constitution. The primary changes in the constitution relate to the merging of the three lay rosters into a roster of Ministers of Word and Service. The majority of the amendments are to required provisions of our constitutions.

Congregations are encouraged to move quickly to prepare the amendments for action at a congregational meeting. In this process, congregations should ensure that amendments from previous churchwide assemblies are also incorporated into their constitutions. Chapter 15. Discipline of Members and Adjudication, adopted by the 2013 Churchwide Assembly is especially important.

The 2016 Model Constitution for Congregations can be found on the ELCA website at [Model Constitution](#). It is also available on the synod website in the resource section under 'constitution.' The synod also has a helpful [FAQ Revising Our Congregation's Constitution](#). For additional assistance with updating your constitution, please be in touch with Patsy Glista, AIM, [pghlista@upstatenysynod.org](mailto:pghlista@upstatenysynod.org)

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At the recent August 18-19 meetings of the Gettysburg and Philadelphia Seminary boards, which included the jointly appointed 12-member Transition Team, the group received positive news regarding fundraising for the fiscal year just completed and encouraging enrollment projections for the coming academic year as they prepared to make decisions regarding the New Venture. At the conclusion of their meetings, they had selected a name for the newly formed seminary, determined a formal pathway forward to unify the two schools, and launched a presidential search process.

United Lutheran Seminary was the unanimously chosen name for the unified school. "United Lutheran Seminary sums up our vision of the future into which we believe God is calling us," declared Bishop James Dunlop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod. The name was selected from a list of many suggested by students, faculty, staff, alumni, and board members. [Read More](#)



### Systems Academy comes to Upstate New York

By Rev. Gregory Tennermann

The ELCA Systems Academy has been meeting for about one year and the Upstate NY Synod has been a part of this experiment in new ways of thinking from the beginning. The impact of the academy sessions is now beginning to be felt in the Synod.

The Conflict and Healing Team is transitioning to an expanded role and becoming more of a Resource Team, available to congregations who wish to have "big picture" coaches work with them during times of change, transition, conflict or heightened anxiety. In future months, some team members will be trained to lead the "Healthy Congregations" workshops that were designed by Dr. Peter Steinke. That training will be available on the territory of our Upstate New York Synod for the first time. The workshops help members of congregations focus on behaviors and patterns of interacting that help develop better communication, less stress and stronger leadership in the congregation.

More intensive mini-academies are also being formed to help the next generation of system thinkers hone their skills to be shared with the church. The Academy is one of the ways that the ELCA is supporting creative leadership development in our Synod with the hope that we can become more proactive in our care for congregations and leaders and more effectively focused on God's transformative mission in the world.

### Synod Ministerium 2016

By Rev. Laura Daly

Southern Tier Conference Dean

Ninety-five clergy gathered for the annual ministerium in Canandaigua to be inspired by Rev. Dr. David Lose, share expertise in workshops, and exchange stories in the beautiful surroundings of the Finger Lakes. Detailing the many changes in culture over the last fifty years, Dr. Lose challenged us to reclaim the power of biblical story. Though culture has changed, the power of story to lay claim on our imaginations has not. Biblical imagination invites us to recognize patterns from the biblical story in our lives. Through stories and many examples, Dr. Lose suggested new ways for preachers to help people recognize God's activity in daily life, and reclaim vocation as part of God's story.



### New congregations and exciting experiments in congregation partnership are popping up across the synod!

By Rev. Norma Malfatti

New congregations and exciting experiments in congregation partnership are popping up across the synod! In the October Living Lutheran insert I told the story of the Karen-speaking ministry in Syracuse, but that was just one of the four new congregations in our synod. Here's a snippet of another new community in our midst:

Yeshurun Lutheran Church in Buffalo hopes to be the newest Synodically Authorized Worshipping Communities (SAWC) in Upstate New York. Growing among Amharic speaking Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees, Yeshurun provides a place where God's people gather to grow deeper in their relationship with Jesus, receive mutual support as they adjust to a new culture, language and land, and learn to exercise their discipleship in new ways. Their name comes from Deuteronomy 33:26 and is one of the poetic Hebrew names for God's people, Israel, meaning upright and honest. As the Israelites were God's beloved, so too are the people of this new congregation, who seek to live faithfully as God's people, just as God is faithful to them "and rides through the heavens to help them...[so they can] dwell in safety" (Deut. 33:26-27). They are led by Pastor Yaekob Sibhat, a pastor of over 20 years, who came to the US from Ethiopia several years ago, and is awaiting entrance to candidacy to be received onto the ELCA roster from the Mennonite tradition he began in as a young adult. Yeshurun is currently holding Bible studies in the chapel at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church and will soon begin offering worship services. I invite your prayers for Pr. Sibhat and this new congregation as they grow and explore what it is to be church, to be Lutheran, as we strive to be the church together for the sake of the world.