Upstate New York Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

A REPORT FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE
Conference Assembly - Spring 2017

Grounded, Growing, Giving and Graced

What Does the Bishop Do?
By Bishop John Macholz

I am often asked a simple question: "What do you do as the Bishop?" That's sometimes difficult to answer. One of these days I'm going to chart an entire week of everything I do, or almost everything, to get a better handle on the reality of the office but for now I've singled out a couple of items that will indicate how I spend my time from time to time.

Since the beginning of September of 2016 I have driven 11,980 miles in my car and flown an additional 3,925 miles by air, bringing the total miles travelled to 15,905 miles.

As the synod is rather large in geographic size there are often nights when I can't make it home for the night so I stay in area hotels or occasionally someone's home. In the same time frame as above I've spent 48 nights away from home, including Conference of Bishop Meetings, Academy of Bishops Meetings, preaching opportunities and countless other ministry moments.

I have preached and sometimes presided at twenty congregations in the synod. In those moments I have been blessed to get to know people a little bit, share some stories about the synod, offer a children's sermon about the Bishop's Crozier, aka Shepherds Staff, and answer questions that sometimes have answers but often don't.

I have been involved in over 126 meetings of various shapes and sizes from Boards to Councils to Teams to Committees to couples to individuals and everything in between.

Beyond that I have fielded an unknown number of phone calls, worked on sermons and presentations, written articles like this for publication, worked on planning the Rostered Ministers Gathering for this summer, joined the ELCA Church Council as the Region Seven Liaison Bishop and offered prayers at innumerable locations and times. Bishop's Confidential Recommendations are needed for Candidates seeking to enter the roster of the ELCA, letters to offer thanks or make inquiries or simply respond to requests are running and afloat along with a cadre of colleagues and hundreds of lay people who work and pray and hope to move this synod forward.

And all of this is gift and grace. The question I am asked the most is 'How do you like your job?" My response is always the same, "I love this call 95% of the time. It has its moments but they are few and far between and are superseded by the good things that happen in this place."

Thanks for being a part of this endeavor we call Church. We are the Church together and better for it. I am extremely thankful for your partnership and the gifts you bring. Together we can bless the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And, with the aid of the Holy Spirit? Watch out!!!!

Extremism Workgroup
By Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson

In August 2016, Bishop John Macholz formed a workgroup to respond to an action of the 2016 Synod Assembly regarding religious extremism. Rather than dictate a specific course of action, the workgroup decided to divide their work into four areas and to provide resources that could help congregations grow in their awareness as well as build capacity for addressing this complex issue. The areas were:

1) Understanding the Relationship Between Religion and Extremism
2) Supporting the Global Christianity in Times and Places of Persecution
3) Engaging in Civil Discourse Around Difficult Social Issues
4) Fostering Interfaith Dialogue

As this workgroup finalizes their work, they will share the finished product through the Upstate Update. Both an online and pdf form of the resources will be made available. In addition, the workgroup is planning a workshop for Synod Assembly to give leaders further opportunity to engage in discussion and identify ways to introduce these topics in congregational settings.

Extremism Workgroup: Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson; Rev. Krista Mendoza; Vicar Samantha Rossi; Rev. Dustin Wright; Rev. Lexa Liepe and Rev. AJ Striffler.

Systems Academy Report
By: Rev. Gregory Tennermann

The Upstate New York Synod was one of the first synods to participate in the newly formed ELCA Systems Academy. Following his retirement, Rev. Gregory Tennermann accepted the role of Natural Systems Coordinator for the synod. In addition to participating in the Academy for four years, he has agreed to continue to consult with the Conflict and Healing Team, work with Intentional Interim Pastors, organize opportunities for leadership development around Bowen/Friedman Systems Theory, lead and train others to lead *Healthy Congregations* workshops, and identify coaches trained in systems theory. He is also available for consultations with congregations and their leaders in the synod.

In the past year, an upstate NY "mini-academy" has been gathered with participants from around the Synod. Deans and Synod staff were asked to nominate candidates for the academy, and 22 persons were invited to participate. The group has met twice with the goal of encouraging leaders to learn more about systems and to begin thinking in new ways about their leadership in the families, congregations and groups that they participate within. Also, the Conflict and Healing Team has spent significant time reviewing its process in light of systems training. They are also beginning to think about new ways that these skilled leaders can be resources to our congregations and their leaders.

Later this fall, Tennermann will be offering training for *Healthy Congregations* workshop leaders. He has been trained and certified by Healthy Congregations, Inc. to do this training to expand the pool of facilitators who can lead these workshops for congregations and other groups, presumably around our Synod.

It is hoped that as more persons become skilled systems thinkers, the church will be better equipped to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world. Systems thinking is a strong tool for leaders to use as we are led by God's Spirit into the future.

Be sure that your congregation's voting members for Synod Assembly are signed up for the synod's Upstate Update where they will be able to find all the information ab0ut our 2017 Assembly. Sign up on the synod website (bottom right corner)

Upstate NY Synod BISHOP JOHN MACHOLZ 2017 Golf Outing
By: Keith Nickoloff

The third annual Bishop John Macholz Golf Outing will be held on Monday, July 24, 2017 at Shadow Lake Golf and Racquet Club, 1850 Five Mile Line Rd, Penfield, NY. The event begins with a shotgun start at noon, followed by dinner, banquet and beverages at 6pm. All proceeds from this event will again fund the Bishop's Special Fund to offer debt assistance to new pastor's rostered in our synod.

The Bishop John Macholz Golf Outing is set up with a scramble format emphasizing fun without the pressure of keeping an individual score – each player hits from the tee, then everyone plays from the best shot until the ball is in the hole. Ask someone, or three, or 7 more to join you and the rest of us at this year's event.

Contest, prizes, challenges, awards and auctions are all part of the outing and the evening designed to help the Bishop's Special Fund, while building new relationships and having fun. If someone doesn't play golf, we encourage you to come to dinner and the banquet.

Last year we unveiled sponsorships for both churches, businesses and/or individuals to host a hole for $100 that includes signage and special thank you during the banquet.

This year we expect to need a few more volunteers and help with the committee.

You can register at www.upstatenysynod.org beginning May 1, 2017. Sign your foursome up before June 15 and get early bird registration of $90/per person and $25/person for dinner/banquet – if you have special dietary needs, please let us know, they will be honored. After June 15, prices are $100/person and $30/person for dinner/banquet.

To sponsor, volunteer, play, dine or with any questions, please feel free to email or call Keith Nickoloff at knickoloff@pharos.com, or 585-749-4847.

Synod Assembly Registration Opens April 1, 2017

Building Bridges
Synod Assembly 2017