



**Zimbabwe Visiting Personnel** by Beth Walker



The UNYS has two international companions: the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia (ELCZA) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ). UNYS was fortunate to have Pastor Grecious Moyo (ELCZ), a Masters student at Luther Seminary, in residence Summer 2015.

To fulfill his Curriculum Practical Training, Pastor Moyo joined congregations in Utica and Syracuse in July and Buffalo in August. He attended confirmation camps at Vanderkamp and LCLC and deacon trainings at Hartwick Summer Institute, Oneonta and WNY Summer Institute of Theology, East Aurora. While not an official exchange, Pastor Grecious' visit provided an idea of what personnel exchanges might entail. Visitation objectives included Bible story interpretations, comparing training for lay-leaders, and urban ministry implementation.

The UNYS Global Mission Committee coordinated the visit. Local coordinators for Central Crossroads (Rev. Marie Jerge) and Niagara Frontier (Rev. Marsha Irmer) gathered planning committees, communicated with congregations and clergy, and arranged hosting, preaching, and funding. The Global Mission chairperson (Beth Walker) communicated with the ELCA international scholarship committee and Luther Seminary to arrange for Curriculum Practical Training college credit, visa modifications allowing receipt of a stipend, and to ensure that scholarships and health insurance would remain in effect. The Global Mission Committee arranged for transportation between MN and NY, hosted upon arrival and between conferences, and served as consultation and back-up.

Pastor Moyo received a \$150 weekly stipend from the conferences and supply preaching payments from congregations. A local bank account was established so that he could deposit and withdraw funds.

**Synod Welcomes 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,

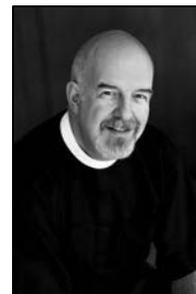
Norma began her work among us on August 1 and has quickly begun learning about our congregations and meeting with our Mission Renewal and Stewardship Tables.

**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 seeks to enhance synod communication, facilitates congregations in growing their communication technology usage and keeps us informed as to how we are the church together.



He also maintains and updates our synod website, enhances our social media usage and develops printed materials.

**Bishop's Convocation Held in March**



In March 2015 rostered leaders and congregational members gathered at First English Lutheran, Syracuse for the 1<sup>st</sup> Bishop's Convocation facilitated by Bishop Jim Hazelwood, New England Synod. Those gathered

heard about the "Nones," the Millennial generation members who have no connection with the church and discussed the topics, "Where in God's name are we?" and "Conversations with people who don't go to church."

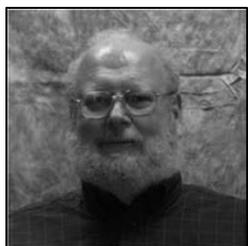
## Bishop's Inaugural Golf Tournament

On a day that started out sunny and warm and ended as overcast, cold and wet 48 golfers and approximately 23 volunteers gathered at Shadow Pines Golf Course in Penfield, New York for the Inaugural Bishop's Golf Tournament in the Upstate New York Synod. Two different times the tournament was stopped for lightning in the area as the skies opened and rain inundated the course. Yet, in spite of that the spirit of those golfing was not dampened even in the face of play being called after 11 holes, by the course staff due to weather. The top Tournament places went to Kevin Hoffman's team in 1st<sup>st</sup> place; 2nd place to Keith Nickoloff's team; and 3rd place was Don Nickels team from Central Crossroads.



Thanks to Keith Nickoloff and a wonderful staff of volunteers as well as much work and lots of energy, the tournament was deemed a success and grand start! A total of \$3,954.28 was raised to support the Bishop's Discretionary Fund, a good time was had by all, and new relationships were forged as old ones were renewed. All in all it was a great day filled with fun, despite the rain, and there is hope for the next time we will gather to chase that silly little ball around creation hoping against hope to beat the odds.

Thanks to all who participated in any way, shape or form. Your presence and gifts were a blessing.



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 beginning in

October 2015. 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.

## Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton Joins us at Synod Ministerium

In September of 2015, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton joined the rostered leaders of the Upstate New York Synod



Ministerium at Notre Dame Retreat Center in Canandaigua. As the keynote speaker, Bishop Eaton shared her keen sense of humor as well as her pastoral presence and her observations on what it means to be the ELCA in today's world.

Bishop Eaton focused on the four emphases she suggests for framing our understanding of the ELCA: we are church, we are Lutheran, we are church together, and we are church for the sake of the world. Worship services also focused on these four emphases in their style, readings, and hymnody. Leaders came away rested, refreshed, laughing, and thinking about the ELCA in a new way.

## Quadrennial Review Held for Synod

In August 2015, Dr. Ken Inskip, Director, and staff members from Research and Evaluation for the ELCA were on the territory of our synod leading us in a Synod Review. The review is exploratory and focuses on establishing more clear direction for the synod following the recent election of our new bishop.

Research and Evaluation staff facilitated meetings at three locations across the synod territory for conversations with pastors who brought with them one lay member of their congregation, most often the congregation council president or other officer. Separate meetings also were held at each location for conversations with synod council members.

Conversations focused around challenges faced by congregations, what is going well for them, what they would like their relationship to the synod to be, what they are willing to contribute to the mission of the whole synod and what their vision for the synod might be. The information gleaned from these conversations along with previous dialogues around Appreciative Inquiry and Healthy Congregations and Healthy Pastors are aimed to help give shape and direction to our future as a synod.

The information collected in the conversations was collated and analyzed by Research and Evaluation and formed the basis of a report, which is now the “property” of the synod council. At its November 2015 meeting our synod council reviewed and discussed the report, established priorities based on the report’s findings, and will make the report and the synod council’s recommendations publicly available in early 2016.

We’re most grateful to all participating pastors, lay leaders and synod council members for their candid reflection and input, as well as to Ken Inskip and the staff of Research and Evaluation for their collegiality and expertise. We look forward to the opportunities before us for ministry in this synod!



What is **Mission Renewal Table**? It is not a group of people who help congregations get more people to come to worship but instead helps congregations to re-root in their identity as children of God and to explore what that means for their participation in God’s mission in the world. This work, then, ranges from supporting people who feel God is calling them to form a new congregation to congregations who are in need of a renewed connection to

God’s mission. Since the geography of Upstate New York is large, we have divided this work among four Regional Renewal Tables: Team East - Hudson Mohawk and Foothills; Team Central - Central Crossroads and Southern Tier; Team Genesee Finger Lakes; and Team West - Niagara Frontier and Southwest.

These teams have accomplished much this year. In the East and West they have walked with congregations who are forming parishes; Team Central hosted a workshop day to help congregations plan for the future; and Team GFL has been casting a vision for the whole conference; all while helping 90 congregations across the Synod take, and receive feedback from, the Congregational Vitality Assessment. In addition Team Central approved a new Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community Exploration in Syracuse among Karen speaking refugees from Myanmar and in 2016 Team West will be seeking partnership and support for a new congregation (Amanuel Church) among Ethiopian refugees and immigrants in Buffalo. Also in 2016 the Teams will be focusing on Transformational Ministry, being trained as facilitators to better walk with congregations across the synod in renewal and transformation.

## Stewardship – New Table Changes

One of the things we heard at Synod Assembly this year was that it is time to revamp and revitalize our approach to stewardship, financial and otherwise. So, under the leadership of the Rev. Paula Roulette (Holy Trinity, Skaneateles) and DEM, Rev. Norma Malfatti, the Stewardship Table set to work spending time in Bible study, prayer and conversation with people across the Synod. Their understanding of stewardship is: "the faithful managing of God's gifts in life with Jesus Christ at the center." In its conversations, the Table learned that the Body of Christ in Upstate New York is engaged in a lot of ministry but there are many looking for support and encouragement in three main areas: help identifying and using spiritual gifts and passions; investing and managing the future of God’s mission and church through holistic stewardship (financial, care of creation, spiritual gifts, faith formation, and more); and more open communication and access to stewardship resources.

In the first months of 2016 the Stewardship Table will be working through these goals, curating resources and reaching out to congregations to learn about, and support, their stewardship ministry. If you or your congregation would like the Stewardship Table to partner with you please be in touch with Rev. Paula Roulette ([runper@aol.com](mailto:runper@aol.com)) or Rev. Norma Malfatti ([nmalfatti@upstatenysynod.org](mailto:nmalfatti@upstatenysynod.org)).

### Welcoming Event Retreat Reflections

Warm weather...  
A walk in the woods...  
A word from our Bishop...  
Good companionship...  
Good food...  
Good work done together...  
- the ingredients of a welcoming event for new pastors of the Upstate New York Synod!  
Blessed with the beauty and peacefulness of Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center, those of us new or returning to this synod gathered with Bishop Macholz and other synod staff on November 3 and 4 to learn, listen and retreat from our usual schedules. It was a valuable opportunity to meet new colleagues, to listen to each other's stories, to be reminded of things we should pay attention to in parish life, and to remember what we as a synod – what we as the Church – are truly about. Do we, as pastors, have struggles? Are our congregations struggling? Are there areas of struggle in our synod? Yes, yes and yes. But at this retreat we were reminded in ways both large and small that we have each other. And most importantly, Jesus has us. And so we left to return to the good work we have been called to do, each in our own place across the state, each in the hands of a good God. And for this, we give thanks.

By Rev. Gail Swanson, Atonement Lutheran Church, Rochester.

### Churchwide Voting Members Elected

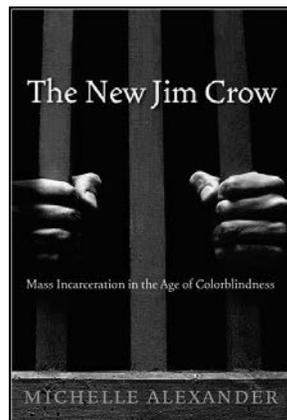
At the May 2015 Synod Assembly our synod's voting members to the 2016 Churchwide Assembly to be held in New Orleans in August 2016 were elected. The following individuals, along with our Bishop and Synod Council Vice President will serve as our elected voting members: Rev. Lee Miller, Rev. Gail Wolling, Mr. Rick Mollenkopf-Grill, Mr. Tom Henry, Mr. Jim Osborne, Mrs. Patsy Glista, AIM, Rev. Krista Mendoza, Mrs. Mary Schwartz, Ms. Sharon Hamilton, Mr. Ryan Lotocki, Rev. Pamela Hoh, Mr. Christopher George, Ms. Meridith Cavanagh, Bishop John Macholz and Mr. Thomas Madden, VP.

If you'd like to receive regular information regarding the Synod, sign up for the Upstate Update at <http://www.upstatenysynod.org> and "like" our Facebook page, **Upstate NY Synod**.

### Racism Task Force by Rev. John Saraka

During the summer of 2015 a work team gathered at the invitation of Bishop Macholz to think about how to address the racial justice resolution passed at the 2015 Synod Assembly. This Racial Justice Task Force identified some assumptions that guided our work.

- From the 1993 Social Statement on Racial and Social Justice, "Racism- a mix of power, privilege, and prejudice---is sin, a violation of God's intention for humanity. The resulting racial, ethnic, or cultural barriers deny the truth that all people are God's creatures and, therefore, persons of dignity. Racism fractures and fragments both church and society."
- Conversations on racial justice and white privilege must become a priority for us as a synod as this is a Gospel problem.
- The conversations must permeate all levels of the Synod.
- These are not one-time conversations but discussions that will evolve over months and years.
- Inaction and silence are no longer an option.



Part of the suggestions from the Racial Justice Task Force that the Synod Council adopted included identifying an all-Synod book read that addresses some aspect of this topic. The book we are recommending to the Synod is The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness by Michelle Alexander. At the heart of the book it argues that "we have not ended racial caste in America, we have merely redesigned it." We encourage individuals, our conferences and all congregations across the Synod to begin reading this book and join the conversation. In the months ahead there will be opportunities for book group discussions using a bible study, and the Study Guide and Call to Action that accompanies this book. As part of carrying on the work of Christ in tearing down the barriers that separate us as people of God, and removing the hostility that is between us, through the cross of Christ and the love poured out there, we hope you will join us in this important work of living into the kingdom of God.