



# Upstate New York Synod

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

### *Annual report to congregations 2008*



*"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"*

*I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."*

(Isaiah 43:19)

As I engage in the work and ministry of the Upstate New York Synod, I am continually aware of the new things that God is doing. Congregations, some over 100 years old, are helping to grow new missions, asking new questions, engaging in transformation, and learning new skills for outreach into their communities. Decline is real, and yet congregations are exploring new ways of partnering together for the sake of ministry.

We are resurrection people who pray first, walk together and change lives. This is not new. What is new are all the ways that we are seeking to be part of God's new thing in this world.

Thank you for your partnership in this important and life-changing work!

Grace and peace,  
*Bishop Marie C. Jerge*

#### *Synod Confronts Communication Challenges*

2008 brought some important changes as we face the challenges of sharing news and information with nearly two hundred congregations and thousands of members throughout the synod. In August a new Communications Strategy Team began meeting to think about how to improve communication and strengthen and focus our existing resources.

In December, Neal Fischer, known to many for his A/V work at Synod Assembly, was added to staff as the Synod Communicator. Neal brings considerable expertise and experience in print and media communications. He is available to work with congregations and agencies on a consulting basis for technology as well as website development. To learn more contact Neal at [nfischer@upstatenysynod.org](mailto:nfischer@upstatenysynod.org) or 607.349.8072.

Keep connected with what's happening across the Synod and in the ELCA:

- Subscribe to the bi-weekly Upstate Update through the Upstate NY Synod website – [www.upstatenysynod.org](http://www.upstatenysynod.org)
- Visit the ELCA website – <http://www.elca.org>
- Share pictures of ministry in your congregation with others in the synod by sending them to: [synoddvd@gmail.com](mailto:synoddvd@gmail.com)
- Learn more about ministry in the ELCA by subscribing to The Lutheran



*Resurrection people who pray first, walk together and change lives*

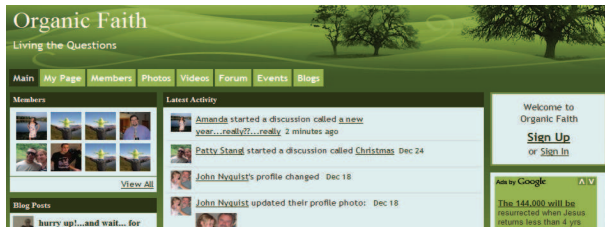
## Organic Faith – New Ministry Reaches Out

Providing young people with a place to belong, share questions, struggle together with doubts and life is the focus of the synods' newest Mission Congregation in the Buffalo area. Organic Faith is a community searching, exploring, and learning together what it means to be disciples of Jesus while embracing the mystery and grace of God. This new ministry is a partnership of Zion, Clarence Center, Upstate NY Synod and the ELCA.

In addition to developing ministry in communities, Organic Faith and the synod's Spanish-speaking ministry Todos los Hijos de Dios are also experimenting with new ways of raising up and educating pastoral leaders in these communities.

*To support mission congregations like Organic Faith, Nile Lutheran Mission in Rochester or Todos los Hijos de Dios:*

- Pray for the ministry and development of these mission congregations
- Become a Mission Partner and provide spiritual and/or financial support for these emerging ministries
- Visit (or join) the Organic Faith online community: <http://organicfaith.ning.com/>



### New Things

- Transforming Congregations Team held retreat in October 2008, working with two congregations and planning ahead for 2009

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is one church body organized in three expressions: Congregation, Synod, and Churchwide. Each expression has its particular functions but all three together share a common mission. Together, we ensure a strong foundation of leadership that enables faithful gathering and gospel proclamation, community involvement, open dialogue and a culture of support for our 4.8 million members.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is the largest Lutheran Church and fifth largest denomination in the United States. For more information about the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, please visit our website at <http://www.elca.org>.



*Resurrection people who pray first, walk together and change lives*

**Annual report to congregations 2008**

- Mission in Transition team pilot projects begun in two congregations in transition



- New and young rostered leaders gathered from across the synod for conversation and mutual support
- Congregations in Courtland, Mayville, St. Johnsville, and Rochester (St. John's) were added to make nearly a dozen congregations in ecumenical staffing relationships.
- Vital Congregations/Just Communities training planned for February 2009



The Book of Faith is an initiative of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The Book of Faith initiative invites the whole church to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered, and sent by the Word.

The Book of Faith initiative centers on inviting everyone to join the conversation, to make a commitment, and to become part of the initiative.

Visit <http://www.bookoffaith.org/> to learn more and join with others in conversation about the initiative at <http://bookoffaith.ning.com>.