

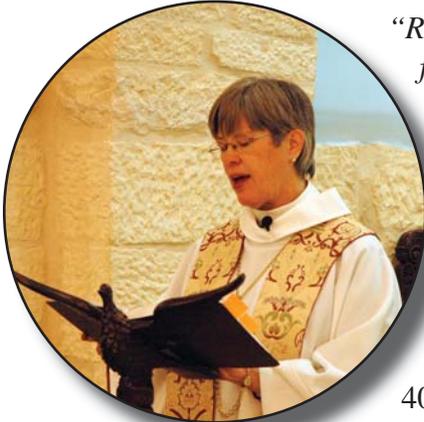


Upstate New York Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Annual report to congregations 2009



"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

All year long I have been watching for signs of hope. Since Advent 2008, I have identified over 400 of them. They are people in Upstate New York, the ELCA, as well as ecumenical and global partners, who proclaim the name of Jesus in the face of enormous difficulties, trusting in God's power to overcome adversity and injustice. They are congregations trying new ways of doing ministry or partnering in new ways to reach their communities. They are young people discerning a call to rostered ministry or excited about assisting with disaster recovery efforts in New Orleans. Hope is evident in worship services from Bethlehem to Minneapolis and beyond, in God's word of promise in the Sacraments and Holy Scriptures, and in moments of retreat and rest walking up a mountain or by a lake.

I give thanks to God for these signs of hope and pray that we have been a sign of hope this past year in Jesus' name.

Grace and peace,

Marie C. Jerge, Bishop

Moving Forward in Mission

Across the Upstate New York Synod congregations are living our shared mission to be resurrection people who pray first, walk together and change lives.

- **Transforming Congregations** - a retreat held in October included groups from Zion, Gasport; Gilead, Center Brunswick; and Trinity, West Sand Lake. Congregations are working with coaches to plan their own season of transformation. Planning has begun for the 2010 Transforming Congregations Retreat. To learn more contact the synod office at 315-446-2502.
- **Vital Congregations/Just Communities** - a workshop in February brought 35 people together to learn principles of community organizing. A second gathering will take place in western New York in February, 2010. To register contact Sheila Penney at 518-842-3441 or by email at upnysynodamsterdam@upstatenysynod.org.



Participants at the Transforming Congregations retreat

Resurrection people who pray first, walk together and change lives



Mission Interpreters enthusiastically tell the stories of how we are changing lives through the mission and ministry of the ELCA, the Upstate New York Synod and congregations. In November, 19 people developed their skills in this vital ministry. The next training will take place on May 15, 2010. Contact the synod office for more information.

- **Mission in Transition** Teams completed their work in two congregations. 2010 will be a year to expand the work of Mission in Transition throughout the synod.

In all this we have grounded our work in scripture, experienced church-synod partnerships in new ways and engaged in life-changing ministry.

Sharing Stories

We continue working to improve communication across the synod. We are being intentional in our efforts to share news so that leaders and congregations can have accurate and timely information. 2009 brought new ways to connect and tell the stories of how we are living out our shared mission.

- We're on **Twitter** – follow us at: www.twitter.com/upstatensynod.
- **Living our Mission** blog was launched to share the stories of how God's work is being done in the world with our hands. Read posts at: www.upstatensynod.org/living-our-mission.
- **Upstate Update** circulation continues to grow. Subscribe for free by visiting the synod website: www.upstatensynod.org. Look for the "Sign up for Upstate Update" form on the right side of the page.

- **Enlighten**, a new e-publication, was begun to publicize synodical educational opportunities to help people grow in faith and discipleship.

Partnering in the Gospel

2010 promises to be year of continuing changes in the ministry of the Upstate New York Synod. Like congregations in transition, we are experiencing the challenge of staff changes. Like congregations doing the hard work of renewal, we are seeking the ways that God calls us to engage in ministry.

Since September significant staff time has been spent responding to reactions to the decisions made at the 2009 ELCA Churchwide Assembly (CWA). To date three congregations have taken an initial vote to leave the ELCA. In one congregation the initial vote was defeated. In the other two, initial votes passed and we expect final votes early in 2010. In each instance the bishop or synod staff has met with the congregation to consult with them during this discernment. In addition, synod staff has been working with other congregations as requested. The decisions made at the CWA will continue to have a financial impact on synod ministries in the year ahead.

In all of this, we rejoice in the mission we share as congregations and synod in the ELCA. We give thanks for the ways that you support the ministry of the wider church through your prayers and mission support. We invite all to join in prayers for our shared ministry, conversations about our partnership, patience and hope as we live into new ways of operating.



Resurrection people who pray first, walk together and change lives

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