



Upstate New York Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Annual Report to Congregations 2011

"He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8

New Pastoral Leaders

In 2011, 27 pastors received new calls to 33 congregations and ecumenical partnerships. (The average is 16 per year.)

Of these, eleven are first call pastors (newly ordained) and about half of them are under age 35. Two come with experience in other denominations. We had four ordinations and two more are scheduled for Jan. 2012.



Clusters and shared ministry

After sharing a pastor for many years, Christ, Johnstown and St. James, Gloversville have formed a new congregation

– Grace, Johnstown. Ministries in Albany, Jamestown, Penfield and Webster have also been strengthened through cluster conversations and shared pastoral leadership.



Health and Wellness Priority

For the first time we reached the Board of Pensions' (now named Portico Benefit Services) goal for people taking the health assessment and earned some "reward" dollars – which freed money for mission.

We offered an all-staff health and wellness retreat last summer led by Tammy Devine and Barbara Debski of the Board of Pensions. This time away for worship, recreation, fellowship, team-building and planning is essential for healthy leaders.



We also began planning for a Peter Steinke *New Visions* event next spring to train congregational leaders and pastors in missional thinking. Watch for coming announcements.

Ecumenical ventures abound

Faith Partnership is our newest ecumenical venture involving Grace Lutheran and Resurrection Episcopal in Oswego and Prince of Peace Lutheran in Fulton. ELCA Pastor Rick Klafehn has been called to serve as the first pastor. Rick joins five other ELCA leaders who have served in other denominations and six pastors from our full communion partners who are serving in Upstate New York Synod congregations. These creative partnerships further the proclamation of the Gospel beyond traditional boundaries.

Lutherans are actively engaged with the NYS Council of Churches in advocacy and support of chaplains. Mary Lu Bowen, Christ the King, Vestal, is retiring after 13 years as Executive Director. (Pictured with The Rev. Robert White.) Karen LaPierre, St. John's, Albany is the Administrative Assistant in the Council's Albany Office. Bishop Marie Jerge serves as President and Pastor Dan Hahn, Grace, Niskayuna, staffs the Public Policy Committee.



For the latest synod information be sure to visit our website, <http://upstatenysynod.org>.

Innovative Urban Ministry



The Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, on Buffalo's east side, celebrated its 100th anniversary and

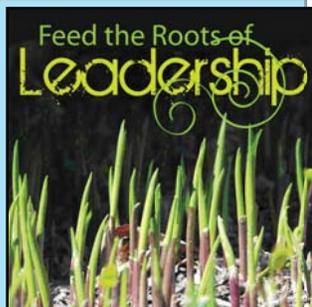
formed a not-for-profit corporation called Resurrection Village, Inc. to extend its outreach ministry even more fully into the neighborhood. Led by Pastor Gary Steeves, the congregation already partners with medical professionals to offer medical, dental and chiropractic care, regardless of ability to pay; works with other congregations to provide a food pantry and vegetable garden for neighbors; provides a mentoring program for teens; and offers a six week summer day camp and a safe place for children, youth, and adults to gather.

Finances

It has been a challenging year! We are thankful that most congregations are current or a little ahead in their mission commitment. A few are significantly behind and overall mission support continues to lag behind budget – down \$19,916 at end of November in comparison to Nov. 2010. Steps taken to reduce costs this year have positively impacted the bottom line. In light of the synod's continued revenue challenges and the impact of Feed the Roots campaign upfront expenses, the Synod Council, in consultation with the ELCA, made the difficult decision in September to reduce our support to the ELCA from 47.3% to 40% for the remaining 4 months of the fiscal year. The Finance Committee is closely monitoring income and expenses and will re-evaluate this as we finalize the 2012-13 budget. All congregations are encouraged to submit their 2012 mission commitment to help us determine how much we can budget for mission and ministry across the synod and beyond.

Feed the Roots of Leadership

We have already received over \$500,000 in donations and pledges supporting Outdoor Ministries, Campus Ministries and Seminary Scholarships in our synod. Many congregations will begin three year drives in January 2012.



Outreach to Young Adults

Organic Faith is an emergent ministry for young adults. Pastor Nate Preisinger, Parkside, Buffalo, gathers young adults in a network of small groups around activities that matter to them, including mission projects, interactive worship, camping ministry, campus ministry, “theology on tap” discussions and Bible studies at local pubs, homes or other locations.



Reminiscent of early Christian groups described in the Book of Acts, they are searching, exploring, and learning together what it means to be disciples of Jesus while embracing the mystery and grace of God. Parkside and the Lutheran Campus Ministry at University of Buffalo are lead partners in this unique ministry.

Responding to Disaster



In the aftermath of Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee, with the help of a Challenge Grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, we raised over \$36,000 to help with disaster caused unmet needs during the long term recovery process. Over 200 Flood Buckets were assembled and delivered. Some congregations have also sent work teams.

Staff Changes

We welcomed as Assistants to the Bishop - Pastors Mary Johnson and Greg Tennermann, and Interim Director of Evangelical Mission - Beth Yenchko. We closed the Amsterdam office and gave thanks for Sheila Penney's years of work with us. We also said farewell to Pastors Neil Kattermann and Amy Walter-Peterson.

Congregation Changes

We have prayed with and bid farewell to several congregations. St. Paul's, N. Tonawanda has closed. First, Lyons; St. Mark, Middleburgh; Evangelical, Gallupville; St. Paul's, Blossom, and their pastors left for other Lutheran denominations.



Resurrection people who pray first, walk together and change lives

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