



*Gracious God, you have blessed us in so many ways throughout 2013 and our 25 years as the ELCA.
 Continue to empower us to proclaim your hope in Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Mission Teams Proclaim Hope!

Responding to God's call to mission requires that we pay attention to renewal. We don't face this daunting challenge alone. Walking together we can more effectively proclaim God's hope in the world. To this end, four Regional Renewal Teams and a Mission Support/Stewardship Team have begun work across the synod.

Team East: Over 50 leaders from the Hudson Mohawk and Foothills Conferences gathered to name assets, share strengths, and to answer the question: how might congregations reflect Jesus more fully within our communities?

Team GFL: The visioning team of the Genesee Finger Lakes Conference hosted eight cottage meetings to identify ways to partner for the sake of mission and ministry.

Team West: Congregations of the Niagara Frontier and Southwestern Conferences are piloting the use of the ELCA Congregational Vitality Survey as an instrument to assess missional health.

Team Central: The Central Crossroads and Southern Tier Conferences sponsored a training event for those serving on Mission in Transition Teams.

Mission Support/Stewardship: Team members prepared this year's Synod Challenge and have begun training leaders to work with congregations in stewardship education and mission interpretation.



**"God's Work.
 Our Hands."
 Day of Service
 Proclaims Hope**

Hundreds of disciples across our synod cleaned streets and flood affected areas, harvested food, visited in nursing homes, served the hungry, connected with immigrants and made a difference in our communities.

Leaders Proclaim Hope

Eighteen new calls were issued to rostered leaders. (This is more "normal" after two years of 25 per year.)

- Three persons were ordained to Word and Sacrament ministry.
- Three of our ELCA pastors have begun service in ecumenical partner congregations and three more full communion partners are now serving in ELCA congregations.
- At least 18 lay and clergy leaders served on Mission in Transition Teams in eight congregations. More training is planned.



Health and Wellness Focus Proclaims Hope

For the third year in a row we met the challenge. More than 65% of our rostered leaders took the Portico Health Assessment resulting in lower costs for health care across the synod and an additional grant for synodical programming. In 2013 we were able to provide:

- scholarships for leadership development
- mini-grants to congregations for health and wellness activities
- grants to Regional Renewal Teams for mission planning
- overnight retreat for staff and deans
- second training event with Peter Steinke.

Ideas continue to emerge. We hope to meet the challenge again in 2014.

We give thanks to Portico Benefits, Patsy Glista and Neal Fischer for providing resources to congregations and Synod Council regarding changes in health care coverage.

Receive news from around the synod, stories about mission and more delivered straight to your inbox! Sign up for the **Upstate Update** on the right hand column of our website today. <http://upstatenysynod.org>.

Lutheran Disaster Response Proclaims Hope

Churchwide Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR), individuals, congregations and Thrivent provided over \$140,000 to support recovery and rebuilding efforts in the Schoharie Basin, in Partnership with Schoharie Area Long Term, Inc. (SALT). Those dollars and our many volunteer hours have made a huge impact but with nearly 1/3 of families still out of their homes, there is still work to be done!

June 2013 flooding displaced hundreds in the Mohawk Valley, including Fort Plain and Trinity Lutheran, Herkimer. LDR has provided \$25,000 to support the work of local long term recovery groups. Congregations have donated time and energy, as well as over \$8,000 which Thrivent matched with \$1,500.

Volunteers are the back-bone of LDR in upstate New York. Gary Roller (Redeemer, Rochester) serves as chair. To volunteer or invite someone to talk about preparedness email ldrteam@gmail.com.

Pastor Paul Herpich (King of Kings, Liverpool) is recruiting and training a team of volunteers in the Central Crossroads Conference.



Congregational Giving Proclaims Hope

Thank you to all our faithful congregations who have maintained or increased their financial commitments. September 30, 2013 income YTD is \$600 ahead of the comparable 2012 figure. Mission giving in 5 of the 7 conferences exceeds the 2012 level. This is genuine progress and we are hopeful that mission income has now stabilized.

- 54.6% of congregations are at or ahead of 2012 giving levels – up 7% from last year!
- 33.3% are behind, and
- 13.2% have given no mission support. (Thankfully down from 23% last year.)

2014 brings financial challenges including higher health care costs. Only with each congregation's commitment to mission support can we continue together to proclaim hope, grow disciples, do justice, support missionaries, seminaries, faith formation, ecumenical relationships, new mission starts and so much more. Please be sure to submit your 2014 mission commitment as soon as possible!

The Synod Council and Staff Proclaim Hope

It isn't glamorous work, but we give thanks for those who pay attention to, develop, and update policies and guidelines for our shared work. In 2013 the following were adopted or revised:

- *A Policy regarding Undesignated Gifts and Bequests*
- *Compensation Guidelines – posted on website*
- *Personnel Policies*
- *Synod Assembly Policies*
- *Job Descriptions for Synod Council members and Churchwide Assembly Voting Members*
- *By-Laws for Lutheran Social Services, Jamestown*

In addition the Synod Council prepared all the documents for the re-structuring of the Synod Council which was adopted by the Synod Assembly in June 2013 and will be implemented in June 2014.

New Technology Proclaims Hope for the Future.

Thanks to a churchwide grant and the hard work of Neal Fischer, our Synod's Director for Communications, we can now host meetings electronically. This cuts costs, reduces travel time and expands our ability to communicate and work together across the Synod.

Feed The Roots Of Leadership Campaign Proclaims Hope

The ***Feed the Roots of Leadership*** campaign continues to move forward. We have received over three quarters of a million dollars in gifts and pledges to date. All congregations are invited to support the campaign in some way in the first half of 2014. We will celebrate the campaign culmination at the 2014 Synod Assembly.



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