



Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2

Always
 being made
New.

25 YEARS TOGETHER IN CHRIST

Invitation to Assembly

Transformed: Always Being Made New, based on Romans 12:2, is the theme for the 2013 Synod Assembly which will be held June 7 - 8, 2013, at the Rochester Riverside Convention

Center. The Radisson Hotel Rochester Riverside will again provide our accommodations. Join us as we celebrate 25 years as a synod of the ELCA. Come and explore the ways vocation and education help each one of us to hear God's call to be renewed and transformed to do His will. Attendees will have opportunities: to hear our churchwide representative, the Rev. Andrew Genszler; participate in synod business decisions; investigate vocations; attend workshops; explore Mission Faire and much more. Don Johnson, an expert in vocational discernment, will be our keynote speaker.



Health and Wellness - Stewards of Hope

Health and Wellness for Congregations, Leaders and the Synod has been our priority in the last two years. Watch for a full report on our efforts in the Pre-Assembly material. We continue to affirm that *health and wellness* are vital as we seek to be a missional church responding to the changes and challenges of our time. However, this language from the medical field is limited in conveying the hope of the gospel. So, we've been imagining what phrase might better represent our grounding in the death and resurrection of Jesus and our desire to be made new in Christ's image.

Stewards of Hope is the latest in a long list of possibilities. We believe that all that we are and all that we have comes from the bountiful abundance of a gracious God. Renewal, individual and corporate, comes by the power of the Holy Spirit. We need to carefully tend, nurture and share the gifts we've been given: life, energy, power, resources and the Gospel itself, in order to do our part in God's ongoing initiative of bringing hope to a world that needs good news. We'll be talking about this at Synod Council in April. Your thoughts and comments are welcome.

Stewardship Grant to Focus on Mission: Joy, Generosity and Hope!

Our synod received a grant from Churchwide to support a stewardship focus around three essential ingredients for Mission: joy, generosity and hope. Key components of the stewardship focus include:

- Synodical "Mission Magazine" featuring mission stories from around the Synod
- Leadership training: stewardship coaching, new ventures, and mission interpreters
- Increased communications: bandwidth, "GoToMeeting" software for online support
- Every congregation visited within a two year period by Mission Interpreters
- Synod gatherings, training and materials for Stewardship visioning and planning
- Synodical Mission Support/Stewardship table to promote and support healthy and vital congregations



Financial Health

Together we continue to move forward meeting the financial challenges of continued decreasing mission support while at the same time continuing to support various synodical missions. Through the generosity of our congregations we continue to support our many synodical missions including campus ministry, our camps, and urban ministries such as the new mission church, South Wedge Mission, which began in Rochester last September. A portion of our gifts, 42% in 2013, is shared with the ELCA to support ministries like the malaria campaign, disaster recovery, and hunger. Continued mission support helps take God's mission into the world.

Our 2013 budget maintains our giving levels of support for our camps, campus and urban ministries and other outreach, but it also reflects the continued decline in mission support income. Thanks to the receipt of a generous bequest received late in 2012, the synod will be forwarding some additional support to Churchwide, the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, our camps and campus ministry programs, and two urban ministry programs – Atonement, Syracuse and South Wedge, Rochester.

The federal Affordable Care Act is bringing changes in health care for FY2014. Treasurers and others in congregations who are responsible for health coverage decisions are encouraged to regularly check the Portico Benefit Services website (<https://porticobenefits.org/>) for updates and continued guidance.



Social Statement on Criminal Justice

The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries is the Proposed Social Statement that will be voted on at the August 2013 Churchwide Assembly in Pittsburgh, PA. We are planning for a short plenary discussion about the statement during our 2013 Synod Assembly. Please read it before you come. It is available on the ELCA website (www.elca.org/socialstatements).

Feed the Roots of Leadership

A capital campaign of the Upstate New York Synod for:
Campus Ministry, Outdoor Ministry and Seminary Education

Has your congregation supported the ***Feed the Roots of Leadership Appeal***? Forty-five of our congregations have given to the campaign as of December 31, 2012 raising funds through chicken & biscuit dinners, special offerings, even wine and cheese events. The campaign, in its second year, supports the growth of leaders through our campus ministries, outdoor ministries at 3 camping programs, and seminary scholarships. \$296,274 in designated donor dollars has already been distributed since the campaign's kick-off in June 2011.

In 2013 we are holding small group Cultivation Gatherings in conferences. The events provide opportunities to join Bishop Jerge to hear of the appeal's progress and learn how individuals and congregations can support the campaign. Visit the synod's website for more information.

Walking & Talking Together

We are deeply grateful for the feedback we are receiving on our communications efforts. A number of people have commented how useful the resources and articles are that we are including in ***The Lutheran*** magazine inserts. Thanks to a grant received by ***The Lutheran***, they are providing a limited amount of the issues that contain our synod newsletter to congregations who have not been receiving copies of the magazine through the end of this year. To continue to receive our inserts next year, you will have to subscribe to the magazine. The synod plan is available at \$3.95 per subscription and includes the issues with our inserts.

Resurrection people who pray first, walk together and change lives