



Upstate New York Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

A REPORT FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE Conference Assembly - Spring 2010

We are Resurrection People

We have known the pain of loss as we bid farewell to Pastor Ed Sproul after more than 12 years of faithful service. We are also now sharing Pastor David Preisinger's gifts as he serves 2/5 time at Holy Spirit, Albany. Some of these changes have been normal transitions as we continue to align our staffing more fully with our mission. We are intentionally inviting more people, lay and clergy, to be involved in the work of the synod, including the Bishop's office. Patsy Glista, AIM (Office and Finance Management and Synod Assembly) and Pastors Greg Tennermann (Intentional Interim Ministry, Conflict and Healing), David Allen (Global Mission), and David Roppel (Capital Campaign) have picked up some staff responsibilities. We are inviting Conference Deans into more intentional support and leadership in their conferences. Developing these partnerships and the communication systems needed to support them, as well as maintaining our focus on the larger mission is our goal, but it takes time. Mark Betley is our consultant and he will bring some initial plans to the Synod Council in April and the Synod Assembly in June. In this Easter season, we hope that we will continue to see the emergence of new life.

We Pray First

Called to Joy is the theme of the upcoming Synod Assembly, June 6-8, 2010 in Rochester, NY. Evangelical outreach and congregational mission is our focus. Plenary sessions are organized around three interactive Bible studies based on Paul's letter to the Philippians led by Pastors Chuck Schwartz, Dean Hunneshagen and Amy Walter-Peterson. Our intention is to embody the Book of Faith Initiative, adopted at last year's assembly, by dwelling in the word and together listening for God's call to new life. This year we will elect a Vice President and Treasurer to serve our synod. We invite nominations and prayer as we enter into these elections. In addition CONVO youth will build a *food castle* with non-perishable food items donated by Synod Assembly attendees and distribute the donations to a local food pantry in Rochester.

We Walk Together

Ecumenical Partners - We are privileged to have wonderful ecumenical relationships here in Upstate New York and in recent years we've had as many as 16 different cooperative ministries that cross denominational lines. In March we brought together 16 staff persons from the Presbyterian Church USA, the United Church of Christ, the Reformed Church in America and the Upstate New York Synod, ELCA. We read and reflected on the sending of the 70 in Luke 10 and dreamed about how we might live more fully into our full communion agreements. We will pursue a number of initiatives including: 1) Sharing mission trip possibilities across denominational lines. 2) Developing a joint mission strategy for congregational development and re-development. We will be piloting this program for the ELCA in October. 3) Collecting and sharing information on pastors and congregations in transitions, outdoor ministries and lay leadership training. We agreed to meet again in one year to assess progress and continue building relationships. There is much to rejoice in here.

Resurrection people who pray first, walk together and change lives

In Response to 2009 Churchwide Assembly Actions - The Bishop and staff continue to visit with congregations who wish to discuss churchwide assembly actions. Four congregations in our synod have taken votes. Two voted to remain in the ELCA - St. Timothy, Bemus Point and Our Redeemer, Scotia. Two voted to leave the ELCA for Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ - St. Nicodemus, Marilla and St. James, Niagara Falls. Pastor Jeff Milsten is also resigning from the ELCA roster. The Bishop has met with two more congregations that have votes scheduled for this spring. Two other congregations initially decided to withhold mission support and then restored it. A few others are withholding or re-directing mission support. As of March 4 across the ELCA there have been 276 first votes to leave. 197 of them passed. Of these 197 there have been 62 second votes and all have passed though some are still contested.

With our Companion Synods – Evangelical Lutheran Churches in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) and Zambia (ELCZa) - We are in the final stages of planning for our sojourn to walk with our brothers and sisters in Africa July 27 – August 13, 2010. Prayers are welcome! Last count was 15 travelers, 4 of which will visit Zambia. We will conclude our time by gathering with members of the ELCZ in Manama for four days of Spiritual Revival. Those traveling will carry the spirit and presence of the entire Upstate New York Synod with them.

As Part of the Churchwide Assembly - August 2011 in Orlando, FL – This spring conference assemblies will be nominating voting members to the 2011 Churchwide Assembly. For the first time the Synod Assembly will also elect one lay male and one lay female person of color or whose language is other than English. Each conference is invited to nominate one person for these at-large positions. Congregations and conferences are also encouraged to consider inviting youth and young adults to serve as voting members at Assemblies. One of the main items for consideration at the 2011 CWA will be the Social Statement on Genetics. This statement is now available on the ELCA website. King of Kings, Liverpool will host an official hearing on the statement on May 8, 1-3 pm. In addition, on May 1, Holy Trinity, Buffalo will host a morning discussion on the statement. Both of these events will include presentations by Dr. Robert Lebel, (King of Kings, Liverpool) a member of the ELCA Task Force that developed the draft statement.

In Providing Financial Resources - A report regarding the 2010 budget was shared in the March 10 Upstate Update. Income from congregations was down significantly in 2009, necessitating deep cuts. So far in 2010, year-to-date mission support from congregations is slightly ahead of last year. Pastor Glenn Schoonover, our Consultant from Kairos and Associates, is working with our Capital Campaign Coordinating Team, led by Pastor Wendy Buckley. We are in process of finalizing the case statement so that visitation can begin.

We Change Lives

The Lutheran Seminary at Philadelphia recently hosted a consultation of 20-25 youth and young adults from across Region 7 and their Bishops. We studied Scripture and talked about how God was doing new things in the church and in the world and how we might work together to be part of this new life. What articulate and faithful young persons! What energy they have for the faith! Again and again we heard that outdoor ministries, camps and conference centers and campus ministries have been significant in faith formation. Upstate New York had 5 representatives and their witness to Christ and their involvement in ministry is a sign of hope! The next day was the day for Assignment for First Call pastors. We're excited that brothers Scott and Shawn Hannon (First, Jamestown) were assigned to our synod. The first call candidates have a wide variety of gifts and skills, and they all displayed a passion for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ and a readiness to take on leadership responsibilities in the church.

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