



Upstate New York Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

A REPORT FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE Conference Assembly - Spring 2011

Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, "Rejoice!"

Phillipians 4:1

We are Resurrection People

As resurrection people we believe that the power of God that raised Christ to new life on Easter is alive in us and in our world today. We have seen God's resurrection power at work in the actions of Friendship Lutheran Church, Amherst. As the congregation prepared to close and sell their building they considered how they might plant new life elsewhere. The members of Friendship voted to give \$200,000 to the Upstate New York Synod's Feed the Roots of Leadership capital campaign in order to support outdoor ministry and seminary scholarships. In addition, an anonymous donor has pledged \$250,000 over five years to support seminary scholarships at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia as part of the capital campaign. We rejoice at the news of these first major gifts. Feed the Roots of Leadership has begun its public roll-out and will be inviting congregations and individuals to join in supporting outdoor ministry, campus ministry and seminaries in their work of raising up new leaders.

We Pray First

Pray first is not just a slogan in the Upstate New York Synod, it is a way of life. Upon hearing the news that Former Assistant to the Bishop John Kroschel had been diagnosed with a brain tumor, members of Lord of Life, Depew joined together in a 24-hour prayer vigil on February 1 and 2 to offer prayers for John, his family and his caregivers. St. Timothy, North Greenbush scheduled a 24-hour prayer vigil for the Upstate New York Synod and those suffering throughout the world on March 18 and 19. Our prayers for one another, for our pastors and bishops, for our partners in ministry, and even for strangers are a tangible expression of our encouragement for one another as well as a way that we live with Christ at the center of our lives.

We Walk Together

Through Financial Support - Despite a year of financial challenges we have reason to rejoice. We ended the 2010 fiscal year nearly breaking even thanks to the careful financial management of our office staff. We also rejoice that 44 percent of congregations met or exceeded their financial commitment to the Upstate New York Synod in 2010. In a year when the overall economy continued to lag and congregations faced their own challenges, we give thanks for all who are financial partners in our shared mission and ministry.

We are still receiving Mission Commitment forms for 2011. Congregations that have not yet completed a form can access it from the synod website.

Resurrection people who pray first, walk together and change lives

Through Consulting with Congregations - The Bishop and staff continue to visit congregations to discuss 2009 Churchwide Assembly actions. Since our last report to conference assemblies, three congregations took their second votes to leave the ELCA – St. Mark’s, Middleburgh; Evangelical, Gallupville; and First, Lyons. At their February meeting, the Synod Council agreed to their requests to terminate their relationships with the ELCA. This action was necessary because each of these congregations was formerly a LCA congregation. St. Paul’s, Blossom (outside Buffalo) recently took their first vote to leave. Bishop Jerge has scheduled the required consultation with the congregation for May 10, 2011. As of March 3, 2011, across the ELCA there have been 791 first votes to leave. 551 congregations have passed their initial votes and 240 have failed. Of the 551, 437 congregations have taken their second votes, 414 of these second votes have passed.

Through Identifying Leaders – Even as we work to raise up leaders for the church in the future, we celebrate with those seminarians preparing for leadership in the church today. At the recent Region 7 Assignment process synod staff were able to interview many of the 27 candidates available for first call. We were pleased to have seven first call candidates assigned to our synod. They come from various seminaries and with a variety of backgrounds. We have begun working on placements.

Through Staff Changes – Changes in staffing continue in the Upstate New York Synod. We have welcomed the Rev. Mary Johnson as Assistant to the Bishop for Candidacy. Former Assistant to the Bishop for Candidacy, the Rev. Neil Kattermann, will continue working with congregations in western New York on a more limited basis. We have also received the resignation of the Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop effective May 31, 2011. Bishop Jerge will be working in the coming weeks with the churchwide office regarding her replacement as well as thinking through all synod staffing to determine the best way to move forward.

Through Disaster Relief – Perhaps one of the clearest ways that we live our mission is through the ELCA’s work in responding to disasters. The ELCA has an expansive network of Lutheran and ecumenical global companions through which it engages in relief and rehabilitation following major international disasters. As of the March 25, 2011, the ELCA Disaster Response had received gifts totaling more than \$750,000. Working closely with the Japan Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Lutheran World Federation and the Church World Service we are walking with our neighbors in Japan and providing direct assistance to survivors of this disaster. We’ll keep walking together as they rebuild their lives.

We Change Lives

The 2011 Synod Assembly will be held June 5-7 at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center. This year’s theme, *Empowered to Serve*, will focus on the ways that we live out our faith in daily life. Through worship, workshops and sharing stories we will experience how God is changing lives and inviting us to participate in and bear witness to that work in the world. We will be joined at this year’s assembly by ELCA representative, the Rev. Dan Rift, director, ELCA World Hunger and Disaster Appeal, and by keynote speaker Peter Vogelaar, executive director, Mohawk Valley Resource Center for Refugees. Registration is now open through the synod website – www.upstatenysynod.org.

Stay informed

Sign up for the Upstate Update – the e-letter of the Upstate New York Synod by contacting Neal Fischer at nfischer@upstatenysynod.org and visit our website at www.upstatenysynod.org



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