



# Upstate New York Synod

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

September 15, 2015

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

To say that the church is living into and through a time of transition and change would be a gross understatement as you well know. Congregations once vibrant and hopeful and served by a full time pastor are struggling to make ends meet and wondering about viability and the future.

Others watch as membership shrinks for any number of good and understandable reasons and question what the future shape of ministry looks like, as well as how they can be served by a pastor and in what capacity and time frame.

Still others are working through a process we currently refer to as Holy Closure, being good and careful stewards of what God has given them over the years and shepherding it in a fashion that is faithful and hopeful for the good of the whole church. I'm sure there are other scenarios as well. We are all asking hard questions at the local and synodical level around these concerns and realities. They are serious matters to deal with in these days.

I believe there are also opportunities and endless possibilities if we listen carefully and prayerfully to discern where the Spirit is leading us into God's new future. That's not to suggest there are easy answers or directions but this is a time of listening and dreaming and wondering about the new shape of the church and ministry and what we are called toward. It's going to be a long journey but a profitable one if we are faithful to the process and our Lord.

In the meantime, it is helpful to be aware of the options we are presently working with in this synod. To be sure, these are a moving target as we move forward but the best that we have right now. Those options can be seen on our web site at <http://tinyurl.com/UNYSoptions> . Please take a look so that together we can understand opportunities that exist. Not every congregation will be moving in this direction but to be aware together of the ways to be church into this immediate future will be of assistance to all of us.

If you have any questions please be in touch with either your Dean or myself. Be happy to help out if possible.

In Christ and Hope,

John S. Macholz, Bishop