



# Upstate New York Synod

## Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

### **WELCOME TO THE UPSTATE NEW YORK SYNOD**

*A Resurrection People who Pray First, Walk Together and Change Lives*

We're delight that you have been called to serve with us. We hope this information will help you to feel more at home here in the Upstate New York Synod.

In Christ  
John S. Macholz, Bishop

**Automobile:** <http://www.nydmv.state.ny.us/>.

**Driver's Licenses** – If you have a valid driver's license from another state or country, you may drive in New York State. You must apply for a New York license within 30 days of establishing a residence here. If you are licensed in the United States, or a Canadian province or territory, you need only turn in your out-of-state license, expired more than one year, before you apply. You must take written road tests, plus the safe driving course. Your license expires on your birthday eight years after you receive it. There is a fee for a license. For more information, call your local Department of Motor Vehicles or visit their website indicated above.

**Auto Registration** – You must be 16 years old to register a vehicle. Those new to the state must obtain a New York registration within 30 days of establishing residence. Proof of ownership is necessary, as well as proof that the vehicle is insured and that state and county taxes have been paid. For more information, please contact your local Department of Motor Vehicles.

**Insurance** – Your vehicle must be covered by liability insurance as long as it is registered, even if you don't drive it. The state requires minimum liability coverage of \$25,000 for injury to one person, \$50,000 for injury to more than one person, \$10,000 for property damage, \$50,000 for basic No-Fault coverage (injury to those in your vehicle regardless of fault) and \$25,000 Uninsured/Underinsured coverage (protection from vehicles carrying no insurance or insufficient insurance).

**Inspection** – Vehicles must be inspected at least once a year, and whenever ownership changes, at an official state-licensed inspection station. For more information about safety inspections, ask for brochures "Vehicle Inspection, Facts for Consumers" at any Department of Motor Vehicles or visit the website <http://www.nydmv.state.ny.us/>.

### **Pet Licensing**

Rabies inoculations are required for all cats and dogs by the time they reach six months old. Updating the shots varies (check with your city/town clerk). Within 30 days of moving to New York, you'll have to get a license for a dog at either the city or town clerk's office in your community. Licenses will not be issued without proof of rabies inoculation. In many areas, your dog must be leashed any time it is off your property. You may wish to check with your insurance agent regarding homeowner liability protection if you own a dog.

### **Voter Registration**

You must be at least 18 years old and a citizen of the United States to register and it must be at least 30 days before an election to be eligible to vote within your county. For more information please call your County Board of Elections office.

### **Weddings**

Weddings in New York State may be performed by ministers of the gospel, other religious leaders, mayors and justices of the peace. You do not need to register anywhere; simply indicate who you are and where you live on the form.

Before you do a wedding, make sure that you have a wedding license in front of you (not promised, not yet to come, but in front of you).

On the marriage certificate, you will see a line that indicates that the wedding may be performed between a certain date and a later date. This means that the date of the wedding must fall between those dates.

Following the wedding, you are to complete the form as indicated and mail it to the Town Clerk/City Clerk as indicated. Sometimes they provide the stamp; sometimes they don't. There is a time limit or the wedding is invalid. Best idea – put it in the mail immediately following the wedding.

Lutheran pastors from other parts of the United States may perform weddings without any authorization from the state. New York State pastors doing weddings in other states are subject to the regulations of that state. Check with the Synod office in that state regarding those regulations. Sometimes there is a fee involved. Sometimes a paper has to be submitted to the Town Clerk or a similar official. Sometimes you need to prove identification.

Lutheran pastors coming from abroad desiring to perform a marriage in New York State must have the approval of either Bishop Robert Rimbo for Metropolitan New York area or myself for Upstate New York.

### **Property Tax Partial Exemption**

Clergy owning homes may obtain a partial exemption from property taxes, but no exemption for fees related to the property. Nowadays it does not amount to a great deal of money. Since most all of New York State is now on a "full valuation system", it means that they take the value of your house, subtract \$1,500, and then tax the remaining amount. When we are in partial valuation, houses were often valued at \$6,000 or \$8,000. In that case, \$1,500 partial exemption made quite a difference.

Contact your Town Clerk or City Clerk for the form that you complete on an annual basis in order to achieve the partial exemption. Deadline for submitting the exemption is April 1, May 1 or June 1 (depending on your location) of the preceding year of the year for which you are seeking partial exemption. So, for example, I would submit the form by May 1, 2007 for the tax year 2008. The partial exemption affects town, county and school taxes.

### **New York State Income Tax** <http://www.tax.state.ny.us/>.

New York State has an income tax. It is based on your federal return. In addition to filing a Federal quarterly estimated tax return, you need to file a New York State quarterly estimated tax return. Forms can be obtained by calling the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance at 1-800-225-5920 or visit their website indicated above.

If you have questions about taxes/filing, consult with your colleagues, dean or Pastor Ed Sproul at the Syracuse Synod Office ([esproul@upstatenysynod.org](mailto:esproul@upstatenysynod.org) or 315-446-2502). If you are a newly ordained clergy person, you need to know about doing quarterly payments to both the IRS and the New York State Income Tax Bureau.

### **Synod Assembly**

Voting delegates are limited to rostered persons (ordained pastors, AIMs, deaconesses and diaconal ministers), persons elected by congregations and Synod Council Members. Rostered leaders under call are required to attend the Assembly. If, for some reason you can't attend, you must request an excuse from the Bishop. Synod Assembly is normally held in Rochester at the beginning of June or the end of May.

### **Welcoming Event**

Each year we have a "Welcoming Event" for all rostered leaders new to the Upstate New York Synod. The event is generally held in the fall at one of the Synod camps. The event usually begins mid-morning with the arrival ahead of time. It ends the following day around 1:00 P.M..

At this event, the Bishop, the Assistants to the Bishop and some Program folks are present to lead discussions, answer questions and help us all get to know one another better. When you receive the formal invitation to attend the event, you are given the opportunity to put any item on the agenda that you would like. You get that same opportunity throughout the event itself. There will be some presentations; there will be some general discussions and there may even be a video or DVD.

### **Synod Ministerium**

The Synod Ministerium is a gathering of rostered leaders held annually, usually the third week of September at Notre Dame Retreat Center, Canandaigua. There is usually a theme and key leader/presenter. It is a great time for learning, informal conversation with colleagues and worship. One afternoon is normally free time when you can be on your own or engage in activities with others such as golf, walking/hiking, winery tours, shopping, etc.

### **Pastors:**

Because of the geographic size of our synod, we invite you and your family members to choose a local pastor for pastoral care, prayer and support in addition to the Bishop and staff. Different family members may have different pastors and the pastor does not have to be in the ELCA. A good question to ask is "If I were hospitalized who would I want to come pray with me?" For First Call pastors it could be your mentor or someone else. Notify your Conference Dean of your choice, question to ask is "If I were hospitalized who would I want to come pray with me?" For First Call pastors it could be your mentor or someone else. Notify your Conference Dean of your choice, hopefully within 6 months of your arrival. Remember to transfer your congregational membership and, your family's where applicable, to the congregation (or one of the congregations) that you are called to serve.

### **Congregational Membership:**

The time of transfer should be around the time you arrive in the congregation, although it could be delayed until the first time you are receiving members in the congregation. Please let your Conference Dean know your choice, hopefully within 6 months of your arrival.

### **Keep Old Insurance Policies**

Please note that as you clean out and rearrange things in your new office, that you should be attentive to things that should not be thrown away. One of them is old insurance policies. It is ESSENTIAL that congregations keep old policies, so that if there is someday a lawsuit they can prove that they had coverage. Not keeping old policies could bankrupt a congregation (or synod) if they have a misconduct case, for instance, and cannot prove that they were covered by a particular company.

### **Reports**

Reminder – We expect all rostered leaders to complete their annual report to the Bishop. They are sent out in January. For those serving in congregations, we expect regular filing of the ELCA Annual Congregational Reports.

### **Roster Information**

Please complete the attached Roster Information form and return it to Kathy Neugent at [kneugent@upstatenysynod.org](mailto:kneugent@upstatenysynod.org) as soon as you are able if you have not previously completed one.