

What is an Area Ministry Strategy?

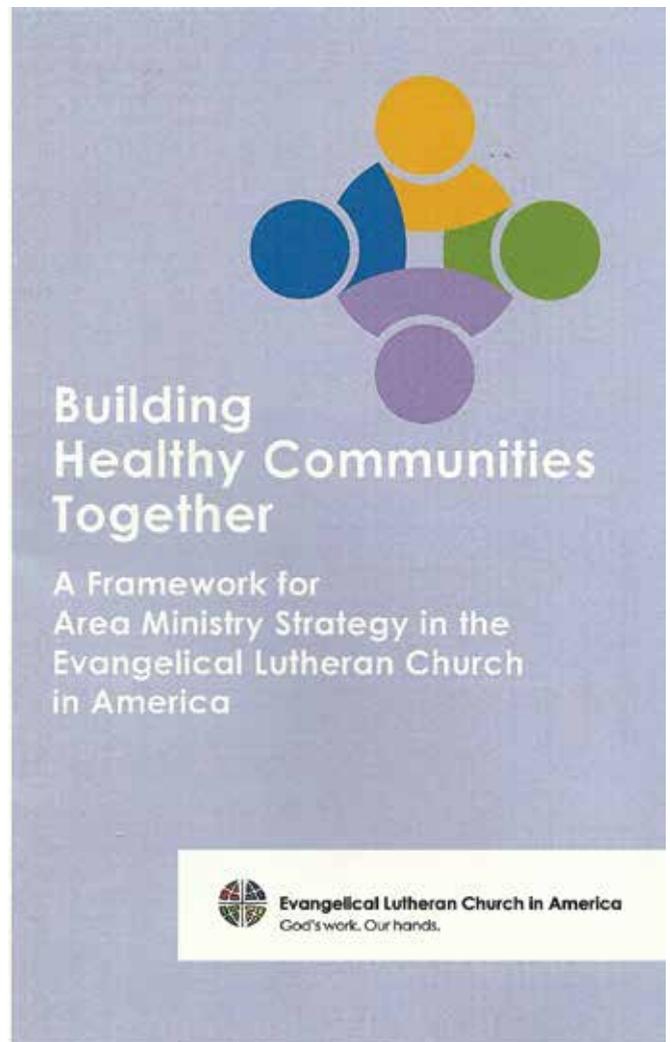
One of the areas of focus for our synod's Regional Renewal teams' work has been to facilitate and accompany partnership conversations. An important model of "partnering" with our neighbors is the Area Ministry Strategy.

ELCA area ministry strategies focus on three goals that strengthen congregations to do ministry and make a difference through:

- Rejuvenating the faith of people who participate in an Area Ministry Strategy in ways that enhance their awareness of God's work and their vocation.
- Renewing the ministry of partner congregations and the members who participate in them.
- Calling ministries into partnership with others to have a collective impact on a specific area (i.e., neighborhood, city, county, issue, etc.) and, in so doing, re-root ministries and people in their communities.

These three goals work in a continuous cycle. As ministries re-root in their neighborhoods, strangers become neighbors and neighbors become friends. Individual lives are transformed through new relationships and new understandings. Congregations also renew their worship and ministry as they examine, adapt and sometimes cease established practices in order to reflect the ever-changing body of Christ.

To learn more about area ministry strategies in the ELCA or to obtain a copy of "Building Healthy Communities Together: A Framework for Area Ministry Strategies in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America," contact Amy Walter-Peterson, coordinator for ELCA area ministry strategies at amy.walter-peterson@elca.org or 773-380-2999. □



Thank you for spending some time reading this edition of *The Lutheran* and our synod insert. If you know someone who could benefit from our biweekly newsletter, "The Upstate Update," please tell them to visit our website at www.upstatensynod.org to sign up.

Teams and tables

Peer leaders work and walk together for congregational vitality

God calls us into mission together. An estimated 65 percent to 85 percent of congregations need some form of renewal. Our Regional Renewal teams are groups of mission-minded lay and rostered leaders in four geographic areas of the Upstate New York Synod who “walk together” with congregations to facilitate renewal, visioning, health and vitality in our congregations.

The teams draw upon the gathered skills and wisdom of leaders and other processes to accompany congregational renewal and transformation.

Regional Renewal teams began a synod-wide strategy for renewal with the “Congregational Vitality Assessment,” a listening process in which more than 100 of our congregations have participated to stimulate missional conversation and imagination. This process promotes renewal by measuring a congregation’s effectiveness as members listen to God, one another and within their context, neighborhood and wider world.

The impact is much greater when the assessment is part of an overall strategy for mission planning and continued evaluation.

Area ministry strategies: forward-thinking and creative initiatives promote and support “mission driven” partnerships in our synod. Work is underway to identify, coach and walk with congregations seeking to partner together. For more information on area ministry strategies, see the article on page D.

Many thanks for the groundbreaking work with congregations by leaders of our Regional Renewal teams!

Stewardship/Mission Support team

The Stewardship/Mission Support team’s working groups include year-round stewardship education, leadership development and mission interpretation. These teams deepen the conversation and widen congregational ownership in the arena of stewardship and mission support.

Highlights of their work include certificates of thanks for mission giving, handwritten thank-you notes to congregational councils, and congregational calling to express thanks for mission support and commitments for mission giving.

The teams also provide:

- **Stewardship education**, including publications and resources offered and sent to congregations.
- **Leadership development**, which includes scholarships for leaders, rethinking stewardship and coaching training.
- **Mission Interpreters** who tell the stories of how God is making a difference in the lives of others through our giving of time, talents and resources.

Many thanks to all who have served on the synod’s Stewardship/Mission Support teams and table. Let us seek and find ways to grow our mission support so that, through our common mission, we might “make Jesus known” throughout the “mission field” to which we are called.

The design and function of the teams and tables was an integral part of the work of our director for evangelical mission, the Rev. Judith VanOsdol, who has completed her term call with our synod. With thanksgiving to God, we wish “Godspeed” to Pastor Judith! □



Confirmands explore faith at Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center

Confirmation camp has been hosted at Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center since the early 1980s. During those 30-plus years, the program has gone through several changes.

The first years of confirmation camp included congregations from the Niagara Frontier and Southwestern conferences. In 1990 the Genesee Finger-Lakes Conference began their own week of camp there. The center has also hosted a number of congregations from the Erie, Pa., area for their confirmation camps.

Until about 1995 conference pastors led just about all aspects of the confirmation camp program: writing and leading the curriculum, planning and leading the worship, and leading games and recreation activities. Their work included a most impressive responsibility—serving as cabin counselors to provide 24/7 supervision of their campers. Since then the center's summer staff has provided the counseling and supervision of the campers.

Currently the weeklong camp includes congregations from all three of the synod's western conferences. The Genesee Finger-Lakes, Southwestern and Niagara Frontier conferences work cooperatively to provide two daily hours of small-group instruction and worship leadership. The center's summer staff provide the leadership and supervision for all other aspects of the program.

But youth camping at the Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center doesn't begin or end with confirmation camp. The center offers a variety of programs for children from first grade through 12th grade. In addition to confirmation camp, the center offers:

- Mini Camp (grades 1-3).
- Classic Youth Camp (grades 3-8).
- Horse Camp (grades 3-8).
- Model Rocketry Camp (grades 3-8).
- Night Owls Camp (grades 4-8).
- Sailing Camp (grades 4-12).
- Recruits in Advanced Training for Service: RATS (grades 9-11).

- Senior High Week (grades 9-12).
- Emmaus: Leadership Camp (grades 11-12).

Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center has committed to never turning a child away because of financial need. Thanks to some generous donors, we have funding available to help any child or youth who wants to go to camp. Please let us know how we can help at 716-386-4125 or contact@lclcenter.org. □



Faith and friends through the years

The Hudson-Mohawk Conference senior high camp program, begun in 1978 at Vanderkamp by the Rev. Lee Dyer and then youth director Chuck Schwartz, celebrates its 38th year in 2015.

Despite changing locations (Vanderkamp, Camp Medusa, Camp SonRise and Skye Farm), changing staff and changing times, senior high camp maintained its traditions and favorite activities. Campers can always expect to find a “Jell-O suck,” complete with coaches and an emcee; luminaries to accent evening worship; and a recognition banquet for graduating seniors that requires proper “dress” attire, including ties, dress shirts, dresses or skirts.

Senior high camp has worked hard to be a place where campers can be themselves. Underpinning every activity are the core values of respect, acceptance, community and relationship. These values, coupled with a high-energy staff who love the campers unconditionally, offer a safe place for questions and conversations about faith and infuse the week with both humor and trust. This makes the senior high program a unique experience, even among church-camping ministries.

Increasing numbers of staff members are former campers who give up a week of their paid summer work schedules, use a week of vacation from permanent jobs, and/or travel from around the country to work with the campers. The camp added a counselor-in-training program to more intentionally train leaders—both in the camp setting as well as for “real-world” leadership.

Senior high camp has come full circle, as it returned to Vanderkamp this year. The Mohawk Valley Lutheran Confirmation Camp joined with Hudson-Mohawk and connected the middle school camping program with the senior high program again. Other conferences were also invited to participate in what has been, until this year, primarily a Hudson-Mohawk Conference program.

A Senior High Camp Legacy Fund was created this year to help offset the rising cost for both campers and staff to attend camp. The fund is growing through contributions from hundreds of alumni who wish to show their gratitude for their years at camp by ensuring the legacy of this senior high program for years to come. □



Lutherans head to Silver Bay

For more than eight decades Lutherans have traveled to the YMCA Conference Center at Silver Bay on Lake George for family and individual vacations. That tradition was offered again this July.



The historic and sprawling campus offers grand buildings and landscapes, excellent all-you-can-eat meals, beaches, boats, tennis and basketball courts, and a state-of-the-art fitness center with a climbing wall.

Attendees experienced inspirational offerings to refresh the soul: Sunday worship in the historic wooden auditorium, weekday morning Matins services and evening family Vespers, and a closing candlelight service. The Rev. Valerie de Cathelineau of Buffalo, N.Y., served as this year’s chaplain. The Rev. Eric Olsen, Saranac Lake, N.Y., was the youth and family chaplain and Joe Krupa was music director.

Educational offerings to challenge the mind included such topics as “Faith Disciplines,” “How Do I Know It’s God? Discovering God’s Call in Our Everyday Life” and “Close Encounters of the Divine Kind.” Afternoons provided time to enjoy the magnificent campus and recreational offerings, including swimming and free use of watercraft. □