

Cultivating a G.R.A.C.E. Mindset: Restorative Justice



June 2nd - June 3rd, 2023
Bethany Baptist Church,
Syracuse, NY

**The Upstate NY Synod, ELCA
Cultivating a G.R.A.C.E Mindset**





Upstate New York Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Table of Contents

WELCOME TO THE 2023 SYNOD ASSEMBLY!	4
BISHOP LEE M. MILLER II	4
PRESIDING BISHOP ELIZABETH A. EATON	5
ELCA REPRESENTATIVE, THE REV. AMY E. REUMANN	6
SYNODICAL DISCIPLESHIP AWARD	6
CONFERENCE INFORMATION	7
GUIDELINES FOR CONVERSATION	7
RULES FOR PROCEDURES	8
PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES	9
OPPORTUNITIES FOR GENEROSITY AT SYNOD ASSEMBLY 2023	10
SCHEDULE OF EVENTS/AGENDA	11
SYNOD COUNCIL REPORTS	13
THE BISHOP OF THE UPSTATE NEW YORK SYNOD’S REPORT, BISHOP LEE M. MILLER II	13
VICE PRESIDENT’S REPORT, THOMAS E. MADDEN	17
FINANCIAL REPORT	18
SECRETARY’S REPORT, REV. DEBI TURLEY	24
MEMORIALS & RESOLUTIONS	32
2023 RESOLUTIONS AT SYNOD ASSEMBLY	32
<i>Resolution #1: Criteria for Election as Conference Dean</i>	32
<i>Resolution #2</i>	33
<i>Resolution #3</i>	33
<i>Resolution #4: LGBTQIA2S+ Seat on Synod Council</i>	33
<i>Resolution #5: Jubilee Resolution</i>	36
SYNOD STAFF 2023 ANNUAL REPORTS	40
ASSOCIATE WITH THE BISHOP FOR CANDIDACY, ROSTER CARE, AND MOBILITY, JULIE GRINDLE	40
CANDIDACY	40
ASSISTANT TO THE BISHOP FOR SYNOD LIFE AND LEARNING, THE REV. LORI KOCHANSKI	41
ASSOCIATE WITH THE BISHOP, DIRECTOR OF EVANGELICAL MISSION, THE REV. IMANI OLEAR	43
MOBILITY SPECIALIST, RACHEL SOSEBEE	47
ANNIVERSARIES	48
2023 CONGREGATION ANNIVERSARIES	48
2023 ORDINATION/COMMISSIONING ANNIVERSARIES	49
MINISTRY CHANGES	51
ROSTERED MINISTER CHANGES REPORT	51
DEAN’S REPORT ON THE ROSTER OF MINISTERS	52
CONGREGATION CHANGES REPORT	54
IN MEMORIAM	55
ELCA REPORTS	63
CANDIDACY AND LEADERSHIP, REGIONS 7 AND 8	63
MISSION INVESTMENT FUND	64
<i>ELCA Federal Credit Union</i>	65
CONFERENCE REPORTS & UPDATES	66

CENTRAL CROSSROADS REPORT	66
FOOTHILLS CONFERENCE REPORT	69
GENESEE/FINGER LAKES CONFERENCE	71
HUDSON MOHAWK CONFERENCE REPORT	72
NIAGARA FRONTIER CONFERENCE REPORT	74
SOUTHERN TIER CONFERENCE REPORT	76
SOUTHWEST CONFERENCE REPORT	77
CAMP REPORTS	78
LAKE CHAUTAUQUA LUTHERAN CENTER, INC.	78
LUTHERAN SUMMER GATHERING AT SILVER BAY	79
CAMPUS MINISTRY REPORTS	80
CORNELL UNIVERSITY & ITHACA COLLEGE	80
LU MIN CAMPUS MINISTRY WNY TO S.C.O.R.E	81
ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY/NATIONAL TECH. INST. FOR THE DEAF	83
SYRACUSE CAMPUS MINISTRY	84
MINISTRY REPORTS	85
1517 MEDIA	85
ELCA CHAPLAINCY SERVICES	86
GENDER JUSTICE TASK FORCE	87
GLOBAL MINISTRY TEAM REPORT	88
HUNGER TEAM REPORT	90
LUTHERAN CARE IN CLINTON, NEW YORK	91
LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE	94
LUTHERAN IMMIGRATION AND REFUGEE SERVICE	95
NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES	96
PORTICO REPORT	98
RACIAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE REPORT	99
SEAFARERS INTERNATIONAL HOUSE REPORT	101
UNITED LUTHERAN SEMINARY REPORT	103
WOMEN OF THE ELCA	104

Welcome to the 2023 Synod Assembly!

Bishop Lee M. Miller II

*Let streams of living justice flow down upon the earth;
Give freedom's light to captives, let all the poor have worth.
The hungry's hands are pleading, the workers claim their rights,
The mourners long for laughter, the blinded seek for sight.
Make liberty a beacon, strike down the iron pow'r,
Abolish ancient vengeance: proclaim your people's hour.* (ELW 710)

Welcome to Bethany Baptist Church and welcome back to Syracuse, New York! We are so very grateful to our partners, the pastors, staff, elders, and people of Bethany Baptist for their partnership in this assembly. Thanks as well to the Central Crossroads Conference pastors and lay participants who are serving as hosts and volunteers throughout our time together, and a very special thanks to the whole Synod Assembly Planning led by Ms. Joanne Lembach and Mr. Gary Roller.

I am excited to welcome The Rev. Amy Reumann, the Director of Advocacy for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as our churchwide representative this year. In addition to sharing remarks on behalf of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton and the Churchwide Organization of the ELCA, Pr. Reumann will share a special presentation on the work of the Advocacy office. Thank you, Pr. Reumann, for being our guest this week!

We look forward to having a meaningful time together in worship, sharing experiential learning opportunities, working together to elect leaders, discussing resolutions and memorials, and to consider the mission plan of this church.

Together, we will explore God's work of Restorative Justice and reconciliation in the world, which crosses boundaries and barriers to bring the generous, transformational love of God to people, liberating all who may be oppressed that all people might rejoice. We will consider the prophet's call to "let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream" (Amos 5:24) and how we might navigate those waters as church together.

We are so glad you are here!



Welcome to the 2022 Synod Assembly!

Cultivating a G.R.A.C.E. Mindset – **Restorative Justice**

Together we dream a church activated by love
to share in God's restorative justice and overflowing joy!

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth A. Eaton



“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age’”
(Matthew 28:18-20).

Dear siblings in Christ,

We know the gospel changes lives and that God’s power and grace are real and at work today. Together we are called to bear God’s creative and redeeming word to all the world. What if we could make God known to more people? To the child who’s never heard of Jesus? To young adults who are trying to make sense of the world? To older adults who often feel lonely and isolated?

Our purpose – “to activate each of us so that more people know the way of Jesus and discover community, justice and love” – is an expression of our calling and our longing for others to know the love of God in Christ Jesus. We live out our purpose through worship and service, in our congregations and communities, through our individual vocations and our collective work as church together.

Many of you have wondered why we set a goal to reach one million new, young and diverse people. We believe that each of us is made in the image of God, redeemed by Jesus on the cross, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Our focus on young and diverse people is not exclusive but an acknowledgment that younger and more diverse people are disproportionately missing from our pews and gatherings. We are challenging one another to reach out across differences of all sorts to meet our neighbors.

Setting a goal to engage with one million is a way for us to know whether the work we are doing is, in fact, reaching new people. It encourages us to work together to be a church that cares about the world around us and is effective and faithful in responding to God’s call.

Join us on this future-focused journey to widen our welcome and break down the barriers that keep people from engaging with the church. Together, we can help people experience the difference God’s grace and love in Christ make for all people and creation.

In Christ,



The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

ELCA Representative, the Rev. Amy E. Reumann

Senior Director, Witness in Society - ELCA



The Rev. Amy E. Reumann serves as ELCA Senior Director for Witness in Society in Washington, D.C. Her leadership directs staff and church advocacy in federal public policy, through the ELCA-affiliated state public policy office (sppo) network, at the United Nations through Lutheran Office for World Community representation, and with the ELCA Corporate Social Responsibility program. She has served congregations in New Jersey and Wisconsin, and synod ministry as Urban Coalition Director and Assistant to the Bishop in Milwaukee, Wis. Her previous experience includes leading Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania, a State Public Policy Office equipping advocates in seven ELCA synods to address food security and justice issues through education, organizing and policy change.

Reumann is a graduate of Muhlenberg College, with a major in Religion and International Affairs. She earned a Master of Divinity from the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago and the Theologisches Seminar in Leipzig, Germany and an STM in Spiritual Direction at the General Theological Seminary, New York City.

She was awarded a GreenFaith Fellowship in religious-environmental leadership and a Louisville Institute Pastoral Studies Grant on “Public Testimony as a Faith Practice.” Presently, she serves on the board of Bread for the World, and is vice president of her worshipping community, Christ Lutheran in Washington, D.C. Vocationally, Reumann enjoys equipping leaders with ELCA social teaching, raising advocacy as a faith practice and equipping Lutherans to be vocal in the public square. Personally, Reumann is a Master Gardener and serves as a volunteer manager at the Charles Koerner Center for Urban Farming in Silver Spring, Md., and -loves to garden, quilt, hike and read mysteries.

Synodical Discipleship Award

Maureen Gensler



After experiencing a strong sense of God’s call to address hunger in the world, Maureen began the work of learning and serving. She was Church World Service Regional CROP Walk Coordinator in Erie and Niagara Counties for several years. Employed by Food for All, a program of the Network of Religious Communities in Buffalo, she helped individuals determine eligibility and complete applications for government assistance and later served as Public Policy Coordinator advocating to strengthen nutrition programs at home and abroad. In 1992 she was appointed to the volunteer position of World Hunger Advocate for Upstate New York Synod by Bishop Lee Miller I. The Synod Hunger Justice Team came into being in 1999 and initiated the annual synod ELCA World Hunger appeal. Maureen has been on the team since its beginning and is currently chairperson. She has also been involved in music ministry and many volunteer opportunities. Her other interests include spending time with family and friends, playing guitar, knitting, learning to paint, cooking, and nature walks.

Conference Information

Guidelines for Conversation

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” - John 13:35

“The eye cannot say to the hand, ‘I have no need of you.’” - 1 Cor. 12: 21

When we gather as the church in assembly, we are reminded that we are united by a common baptism, sealed by the same Holy Spirit, and marked by the cross of Christ forever. At the same time, we recognize that some of the issues we will be discussing can trigger strong emotions and have the potential to be divisive.

We trust that the church can engage in passionate debate without being destructive of the body by being open to the power of God’s Holy Spirit and by calling ourselves and each other to remember Jesus’ invitation to love one another.

To that end, we offer the following Guidelines for Conversation

- Wrap your conversations in prayer. Ask for strength to remain calm; guidance to speak your point of view clearly, and openness to carefully hear other points of view.
- Listen respectfully and carefully to others. Don’t assume you know what they will say. Respond to what you have heard. Be attentive to what has not been said.
- Speak for yourself, rather than as a member of a group. Use “I” statements, e.g. “I feel...” or “I believe...”, rather than “You” statements, e.g. “you people” or “they.”
- Speak respectfully to and about people at all times, whether you agree with them or not. Allow others to be heard. Refrain from stereotyping or labeling. Remember the point of sharing in this way to open up discussions, not close off discussions.
- Do not question the faith or faith commitment of others. Honor those who have a different point of view than your own. Remember Paul’s admonition in 1st Corinthians (printed above). Those present are fellow members of the Body of Christ.
- Remember Luther’s teaching in our Confessions that in relation to others we should “defend them, speak well of them, and explain their actions in the kindest way.”
- The Book of Acts shows us that difficult questions can be addressed in this manner and successfully brought to a conclusion. With confidence, they said, “It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us...” In that same confidence, our conversation can be blessed.

Conflict and Healing Team
Upstate New York Synod
May 2007 revised June 2007

Rules for Procedures

Quorum

At least one-half of all voting members must be present to constitute a quorum for a legal vote. A majority vote of those members present is required to decide a pending matter on the floor.

Parliamentary Procedure

Robert's Rules of Order, the latest edition, shall instruct our parliamentary procedures.

Proxy/Absentee Voting

Proxy and absentee voting shall not be permitted.

Speeches

All speeches during the discussion will be limited to two minutes. A signal will be given one minute before the speaker's time ends. A second signal will be given one minute later at which time the speaker will return to their seat.

Discussion - Alternating Speeches

Insofar as is possible during the discussion, a speaker on one side of the question shall follow a speaker on the other side. To facilitate alternating speeches, assembly members desiring to speak in favor of the pending matter should carry their green cards and await their turn to be recognized at the microphone directly in front of this podium. Those members desiring to speak against the pending matter should carry their red card and await their turn to be recognized at the microphone directly in front of the other podium. A voting member, having spoken to a pending matter, may not speak again to that matter until all others desiring to speak have had their turn.

Purpose and Use of White Cards

A member wishing to offer an amendment to the pending matter, or some other motion that would be in order should approach either microphone carrying their white card to await recognition by the chair.

Etiquette of the Assembly

In the give and take of debate, both members of the assembly and visitors are asked to refrain from applause.

Moving the Previous Question

A member having spoken on the pending question(s) may not move (or call) the previous question(s). A motion to end the debate by moving the previous question shall apply only to the immediately preceding motion.

Parliamentary Procedures

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE							
TO ACCOMPLISH THIS	YOU SAY THIS	INTERRUPT the SPEAKER	IS A SECOND NECESSARY?	IS IT DEBATABLE?	CAN IT BE AMENDED?	NECESSARY VOTE?	CAN IT BE RECONSIDERED
Introduce business	"I move that..."	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
Amend a Motion	"I move to amend The motion by..."	No	No	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
Give further study	"I move to refer the Matter to committee"	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes (unless it Has gone to committee)
Postpone discussion for stated period of time	"I move to postpone discussion	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority	Yes
End debate and amendments	"I move the previous Question."	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	No (unless vote is not taken)
Suspend Consideration Of an issue temporarily	"I move to table the Motion."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Raise a question about Noise, etc.	"I rise to a question Privilege."	Yes	No	No	No	No vote	No (usually)
Call for an intermission	"I move we Recess for..."	No	Yes	No	Yes	Majority	No
Adjourn the meeting	"I move that we Adjourn."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Other motions to:	You say:						
Request information	"Point of Information."	Yes	No	No	No	No vote	No
Reconsider an action	"I move to reconsider The vote on..."	Yes	Yes	Yes (if motion to reconsider is debatable)	No	Majority	No
Take up a matter Previously tabled	"I move to take From the table..."	No	Yes	No	No	Majority	No
Verify a voice vote by Having members stand	"I call for a division"	Yes	No	No	No	No vote	No
Vote on a ruling of A chair	"I appeal from the Chair's decision."	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Majority	Yes
Protest breach of Rules of conduct	"I rise to a point Of order	Yes	Yes	No	No	No vote (unless it is unclear)	No
Avoid considering An improper matter	"I object to consider-action of this motion."	Yes	No	No	No	2/3	Yes (if main Motion was not considered)
Suspend rules temporarily	"I move to suspend rules so that..."	No	Yes	No	No	2/3	No

Opportunities for Generosity at Synod Assembly 2023

At our Synod Assembly congregations and individuals are encouraged to live out our faith through giving to our neighbors in need. The following list is specific to this Assembly – thank you in advance for your generosity in response to God’s gracious giving!

- **Adult and Children’s Diapers for the Bethany Baptist Food Pantry** Yes, you read that right. Many who come for food are also lacking these necessities, which grow ever more expensive. They will also accept gift cards for Walmart, Target, and Wegman’s.
- **“Bee Generous” ELCA World Hunger Donations** The Hunger Team is challenging congregations to collect \$420 or more for the purchase of two bee colonies (\$20 each) and two community gardens (\$200 each) for ELCA World Hunger. Donations will be accepted and tallied at the hunger table at the assembly. You can also give online with Tithely (<https://tinyurl.com/bee-generous>)– be sure to note “Bee Generous” as the destination.
- **Winter Kit Essentials** We will be assembling Winter Kits at the Assembly this year. These kits will be available to take back to your congregation, and some will be stored at the Mission Hub, a ministry with our full communion partners, the United Methodist Church. Materials will be provided through an in-kind donation from the Mission Hub and a grant from Lutheran Disaster Response. Additional Items needed: Winter-weight socks (3-pack)



Upstate New York Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

TEXT "GIVING"

to 315-284-2956

And select from the Menu to give to:

Synod Mission Support

World Hunger

Community of Good Neighbors

Journey of Faith

Lutheran Disaster Response

And more!

Or use the QR Code:



Thank you for your support!

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS/AGENDA

2023 UPSTATE NEW YORK SYNOD ASSEMBLY

JUNE 2 – JUNE 3

The following is a schedule of events that will be occurring at the Upstate New York 2023 Synod Assembly. Plenaries, Ministry Fair, Friday dinner and Saturday lunch to be held at Bethany Baptist.

All times are estimated times. The Bishop or the Synod Vice-President reserves the privilege to make schedule and time adjustments as needed.

FRIDAY, JUNE 2

10:00am-1:00pm Registration Check-In
Noon Eucharist Rehearsal

1:00 - PLENARY 1

Opening of the Assembly

Report on Registration

Establishment of a quorum

Adoption of agenda and rules of Procedure

Introductions

Appointment of Committees

Report of Nomination Committee

Nomination/Election process

Nominations from floor protocol

Nominations from floor

Introduction of Memorials and Resolutions

Reference and Counsel Report

Keynote - Pr. Amy Reumann

2:30-3:30 Ministry Fair

4:00 PLENARY 2

World Hunger Report #1

Bishop's Report

Reports from Associate's to the Bishop

Youth Gathering Report

Reports from Ministry partners

5:30 Dinner – Dinosaur BBQ @ Bethany Baptist

6:30 PLENARY 3

Treasurer's Report

Introduction of Mission Proposal 2024

Recognition of Anniversaries

Discipleship Award

Evening Prayer

8:30pm-10pm Fresh Air Fellowship w/Cash Bar and Light Refreshments @ Doubletree, Carrier Circle

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS/AGENDA
2023 UPSTATE NEW YORK SYNOD ASSEMBLY

SATURDAY, JUNE 3

8:20am Call for worship leaders

9am EUCHARIST

10:15am - PLENARY 4

World Hunger Report #2

Nomination/Election Committee Report #2

ELCA Churchwide Rep Report and Video

2023 Mission Proposal Vote

Reference and Counsel Report

Other Reports

Elections

11:30am – Ministry Fair with Lunch available at Noon @Bathany Baptist

PLENARY 5 – 1:00pm

World Hunger Report #3

Synod Council Report and vote on resolutions

Report of Election Results

Reference and Counsel Resolution of Thanksgiving

Worship and Closing of the Assembly

Synod Council Reports

The Bishop of the Upstate New York Synod's Report, Bishop Lee M. Miller II

"I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now" (Philippians 1:3-4).

I begin this annual report where I begin each day in this call. Giving thanks to God for who God is, what God has done, and what God is doing in, with, and through the Upstate New York Synod.

Thanks be to God! Thanks be to God for you! Thanks be to God for your congregation, community, partner organization, for the ways God's love is active in us for justice and joy.

I am grateful for the many participants throughout our synod who, centered in the love of Christ and formed together by faith, are building communities of belonging and sending people into the world to share this same reconciling love. We are witnesses to these things!

Because the work of this call can be all-consuming, it has been important to me to reflect on my Letter of Call to assist in the organizing and implementation of our work together. I would like to offer it as a frame for this report.

We call you to exercise among us the ministry of Word and Sacrament which God has established and which the Holy Spirit empowers: To preach and teach the Word of God in accordance with the holy Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions; to administer Holy Baptism and Holy Communion; to lead in worship; to proclaim the forgiveness of sins; to provide pastoral care;

It has been an absolute gift to travel the synod visiting congregations, lay and rostered ministers and participants in our congregations, campus ministries, synod authorized communities, and Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center. I have had the opportunity in the past year to visit 40 congregations and communities in worship, continuing on my journey to visit every one of our ministry centers. There is a richness to the diversity in our worship practices even as there is unity in the love of God that is proclaimed in word and sacrament, and the love shared in fellowship and community. We have congregations of every size who are working diligently, collaboratively, and innovatively. Our pastors and synod authorized ministers are faithful in their study, proclamation and development of tools which build communities of belonging.



We have begun to see congregations discover new life as we emerge from the pandemic, forming new styles of worship, new patterns for community life, new opportunities for people to engage. We are not going back to what was before, but we are emerging, becoming, something new. I am encouraged by the ways communities are stretching beyond themselves to care for their neighbors.

I have also enjoyed leading worship at synod gatherings such as Candidacy Committee and Synod Council Retreats, Ministerium, Conference gatherings, and our annual Renewal of Vocations with Blessing of Chrism Oil. These sacred spaces serve to remind me of our connectedness to one another, and in the forming of community together, lifts us up as the body of Christ in this place. I am grateful for colleagues and coworkers, musicians, preachers,

liturgists, hosts and hospitality folks, volunteers and congregation staff, and partner organizations who make our synod worship experiences possible.

It is a privilege always to provide pastoral care in a time of crisis, illness, grief, or death. I am grateful for the work of our deans who extend much of the pastor care on behalf of the office of the bishop and who keep me daily informed of pastoral care needs. It is a sacred place to accompany our siblings in Christ through difficult times, and the Spirit is at work in ministry of mutual consolation. I also want to encourage all pastors to have their “own pastor.” Someone, perhaps geographically close, who can be called on as needed to provide pastoral care. This has been our synod’s practice for many years, and I encourage it.

We call you...to speak for justice in behalf of the poor and oppressed;

Dr. Cornel West has said that “Justice is what love looks like in public.” I believe that justice is what God’s love looks like “in public.” We are called in our baptism to “work for justice and peace” an echo of the prophet’s call to “do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God” (Micah 6:8). As I continue to grow into this role of the call, I have responded to this charge in at least four ways.

First, has been to lift the role of the church in the work of justice through our G.R.A.C.E. Mindset. That we are spending the 2023 Synod Assembly and 2023-2024 program year focused on Restorative Justice ministries and partnerships is to lift this work as essential for followers of Jesus. Jesus’ practice to cross boundaries and borders to heal, drive out evil, and proclaim the favor of the Lord, becomes the practice of Christ’ body, the church. We do not practice Restorative Justice principles to earn the praise of our peers, the promises of God, or to fill a pew. We practice Restorative Justice because we are a Resurrection People, formed together to love like Jesus in the world. That’s what justice looks like.

Secondly, I have been working to support our synod gender, hunger, and racial justice task forces, and the formation of an environmental care task force in partnership with The Rev. Imani Olear as she stewards these ministries in cooperative leadership with lay and clergy folk. I am grateful for the wisdom that the task forces share with me. We continue to create these ministries adaptively so that they may best accompany the ministry of the whole synod. I am grateful for all those who are engaged in these task forces and committees.

My third area of justice work in the past year has been in my own education and training. I have participated in cultural competency and anti-racism training with the Conference of Bishops. I have continued to read for the sake of my own need to learn and reflect. A few books/texts which were new-to-me this year include Bell Hooks - All About Love, Robin Wall Kimmerer – Braiding Sweetgrass, and Mitri Raheb – Faith in the Face of Empire.

The fourth area where I have been engaged in justice ministry has been to build relationships and work alongside leaders throughout our synod. Currently the synod has a strong relationship with the **New York State Council of Churches**. I have been in contact with Director Peter Cook working together for ways we can strengthen our relationship including in the work of advocacy with our local legislators in Albany. I have also met with the Interreligious partners of **Inter Faith Works** in Syracuse, with whom many congregations in the Crossroads Conference share in partnership and ministry.

Following the horrific, racially-motivated killing in Buffalo on May 14, 2022, The Upstate New York Synod partnered with Lutheran Disaster Response to provide support to **VOICE Buffalo**, an inter-religious community organizing non-profit to support ongoing care and organizing in the Jefferson Avenue neighborhood on the East Side of Buffalo. LDR support was also shared with local congregations who serve in the community with those directly impacted. I have served as a member of the board of VOICE Buffalo since 2020.

We call you to...encourage persons to prepare for the ministry of the Gospel;



What a gift it is to share in the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to encourage others in ministry as well. I imagine that when these words in our call document were crafted one was considering the ministry of Word & Sacrament, and Word & Service. Certainly, raising up the next generation of Pastors and Deacons is the work of every ordained pastor. It is a joy to work with the staff, lay, clergy, seminary, and churchwide colleagues who comprise the Upstate New York Synod Candidacy Committee. What a gift it is to meet with discerning people at the stages of Entrance, Endorsement, and Approval. The conscientious work of the committee helps to form candidates for ministry who are self-aware, passionate, and purposeful about the ministry to which they have been called.

But the work of the Gospel of course is not contained by ordained, rostered ministers alone. We hold that in our baptism the Holy Spirit calls each one of us, equipping us with gifts for the sake of the world. We have been intentional as synod staff in considering our formation and training opportunities for all leaders. We have especially worked this past year to roll-out the renewal of our program for Synod Authorized Ministers. These lay leaders are critical in the life of our congregations.

Synod Authorized Ministers in the Upstate New York Synod serve with congregations in the role of supply leadership on Sunday mornings (Certified SAMs) and, occasionally, for contextual reasons, as lay pastoral leadership in the role of Assigned SAM. Twenty-Seven lay persons were approved as Certified or Assigned SAMs in our fall 2022 enrollment and six candidates for Synod Authorized Ministry were entranced as students. Many thanks for the work of former staff member, The Rev. Lori Kochanski, and for the guidance of our SAM Steering Committee including The Rev. Lowell Chilton, Tom Henry, and Lynn Whitworth, Assigned SAM.

We call you to...impart knowledge of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its wider ministry; to endeavor to increase support for the work of our whole church;

As with the whole call, I continue to live into the role as being a primary witness and communicator of the ministry we share as the body of Christ in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and, through the ELCA, our participation in the Lutheran World Federation. We continue to build our communication strategy to highly the Stories of Faith shared throughout our church, and the various ministries which happen because of the generous mission support shared by congregations.

Every time the Conference of Bishops gathers, every congregation and every person in the ELCA is represented. This happens twice a year in person, and now an additional 3-4 times annually online. This past year the Conference of Bishops has considered ministry relating to: Walking with vital/healthy/life giving congregations and Walking with fragile congregations and those headed into Legacy status, the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church, On Leave From Call status for rostered leaders, the Candidacy process, Chaplaincy, Cultural Competency, Advocacy, Holy Communion practices related to Churchwide Assembly resolutions, the bishop's relational agreement, among other items. I learn a great deal from these colleague bishops and am grateful for the opportunities to develop best practices for ministry, for the sake of our congregations and our neighbors.

A significant experience this past year was participating in a synod bishop companionship trip to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. This trip was by the invitation of ELCJHL Bishop Sani Azar, that we might "come and see" the church in the Holy Land and experience life for Palestinians, Palestinian Christians, and hear the stories of life in the occupied West Bank. Your gifts of mission support, through the ELCA, are shared with the ELCA in supporting congregations, pastors, schools, a university, and Augusta Victoria Hospital on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem. Your mission support equips the church in the Holy Land, while less than 2% of the population, serve the whole community with faith, education, employment, and healthcare opportunities.

The Lutheran Church is a leader in environmental care issues, and the cause for gender justice. We were present to participate in the ordination of the first Middle Eastern woman ordained in the Holy Land, The Rev. Sally Azar.

Along with ELCA staff members, The Rev. Amy Reumann, and The Rev. Barbara Lund, we advocated for the human rights of the Palestinian people, and the ELCJHL with Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, the US Director for Palestinian Affairs, and Prince Ghazi of the Kingdom of Jordan. Bishop Azar asked that upon our return we would continue to tell the story of these indigenous Christian peoples, the “Living Stones” of the Holy Land.

We call you to...equip people for witness and service; and to guide in proclaiming God’s love through word and deed.

I dream a church where love activates us to do justice and share joy. Your synod staff exist to support the ministry of each congregation and community in our church body, and to form, equip, and encourage both lay and rostered people for the ministry of the baptized, called to be the body of Christ. Therefore, our work in reforming synod systems – from the call process to mobility practices, to sharing of churchwide ministries, to opportunities for formation of Synod Authorized Ministers, to workshops supporting rostered ministers, to ecumenical and interreligious collaborations, is all designed and focused to support the work of each local congregation.

We still have a lot of work to do. We are continuing to develop our whole staff so that we may be positioned to equip more people for witness and service. We seek to work cooperatively with our full-communion partners, not only in places of mobility, but for the sake of ministry, intentional collaboration, shared training, and expressing love for our neighbors.

We look forward to what is ahead – focusing not only on maintenance ministry but increasing our capacity to provide the tools congregations and leaders need for this season of Christ’ church. I hope to have a couple of new staff positions announced at our Synod Assembly – and that, fully staffed, we might together proclaim God’s love through the words and actions of our church together.

I am immensely grateful for our Synod Council including Executive Committee, Mr. Thomas Madden, Vice-President, The Rev. Debi Turley, Secretary, Mr. Todd Eames, Treasurer, The Rev. Jonathan Deibler and The Rev. Laura Daly, Dean representatives (2022-2023); our Synod Executive Staff, The Rev. Imani Olear, Ms. Julie Grindle; Specialists, Ms. Lisa Frauens, M.Div. (awaiting call), Mr. Chris George, Ms. Rachel Sosebee, Ms. Kori Tomelden, and Clinical Consultant, Jennifer Genovese. A very special thanks to our Conference Deans, Derek Cheek (who has taken a call in the NE Synod), The Rev. Dan Buringrud, The Rev. Laura Daly, The Rev. Jonathan Deibler, The Rev. Allan Ferguson, The Rev. Jo Page, The Rev. Kenneth Simurro, and The Rev. Jeremiah Smith. Thank you, to each member of the Upstate New York Synod, for the ways you share God’s love in Christ with our neighbors and all the world. Thanks be to God!

Respectfully Submitted,



2022 Churchwide Voting Members

Vice President's Report, Thomas E. Madden

I am pleased to offer this summary report of the past year's activities as your synod vice president.

Synod Council

The vice president's principal responsibility is to facilitate the work of the synod council—conferring with the bishop regarding matters for attention by the council, establishing agendas, chairing meetings and following up on actions as appropriate. The synod council held five regular meetings and one retreat last year. In this post-pandemic era, the council has settled for now meeting two times in-person and four times virtually per program year.

ELCA Synod Vice Presidents' Gatherings

The 65 synodical vice presidents and churchwide staff meet monthly via Zoom to discuss a variety of topics, provide mutual support and on-board newly elected vice presidents. I participate in this virtual gatherings as available.

Synod Council Retreat

In June 2022, the synod council joined with deans and staff in a virtual retreat. Our time together, grounded in worship, focused on welcome and orientation for new council members, receiving reports from synod staff and tending to matters requiring synod-council action. The 2022 retreat also served to transition the synod council into an updated pattern of virtual and in-person meetings based around the synod assembly.

Synod Attorney

Bishop Miller and I meet periodically with our new synod attorney, Ryan Lucinski, to keep abreast of legal matters pertaining to our synod. These conversations are most helpful and we are most grateful for Ryan's ministry among us!

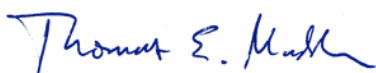
Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church

I am honored (shocked would be more accurate) to be appointed by the ELCA Church Council as an at-large member to the 35-member commission established by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly, having been nominated by the synod council. The commission's first meeting is in July and I look forward to keeping you abreast of the commission's work.

Other

I meet regularly with Bishop Miller, the executive committee, the synod finance and investment committees and the synod assembly planning team.

Gratefully,



Thomas E. Madden, Vice President

Upstate New York Synod–ELCA

Financial Report

“In case you haven’t heard, prices are going up. But, at least there is toilet paper on the shelves.”

- *Headline if I were a news anchor*

Aggregate giving received by the congregations in our Synod dropped nearly 9% from 2020 to 2021, which represents a drop of giving per confirmed member of more than 8% – and we thought 2020 was going to be the stone in our stone soup. The Finance Team’s expectation is not one of a sharp turnaround in that two-year trend for giving.

Overlaying that downward trend in local giving received, is the well-known news that the cost of *everything* is going up. The current year saw a remarkable, recommended minimum increase in the compensation for the Pastors in our Synod – somewhere around the 6% mark over last year. That recommendation, though, is just to keep pace with inflation.

These two factors caused the Finance Team to reduce its expectations for Mission Support to be received from local congregations within the Synod while increasing Synod wages more than in recent history (while still below the rate of inflation). This left the budget to be balanced “on the back of” what the Synod can contribute to the Wider Church. Specifically:

- Our expected receipts from local congregations is 10% less than last year’s budget,
- staff salaries are increasing 3.5%, and
- the share of our mission commitment received passed on to Churchwide will drop nearly four points to 30%, our lowest percentage share in our recorded history.

At its best, a budget is a plan. And, the further ahead we attempt to plan, the louder I imagine that God is laughing. Time and time again, the Holy Spirit has shown all of us that we have exactly what we need to do our piece of God’s mission in this world. While this should provide a sense of contentment, it should not provide a sense of completion.

We are driven by what is given. That’s true of the Synod’s budget, each of our own congregation’s budget, and all of the relationships we have with others in our lives. The Bishop and Synod staff have, and will continue to, foster very positive relationships with our local congregations and members coming out of COVID. Our Deans are seemingly everywhere supporting congregations, pastors and members in each of their conferences.

While some congregations are looking at a shorter future, their thoughts of legacy renew hope for the next generation. Seedling congregations are springing up around the Synod with new and innovative ways to be God’s people in an ever-changing world.

The Bishop and staff are in the midst of re-configuring their roles and responsibilities with a focus on communications and connections across the Synod. So, while the numbers may seem bleak (they’re digits, what did you expect?), the spirit in the Synod remains to be joyful, and hopeful for a future in which we are excited to dance.

It is from this place that I respectfully submit our Synod’s Mission Plan for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2025 (we commonly refer to it as the 2024 Plan).

Peace, Todd

Categorical	FYE 1/31/25 Proposed Budget	FYE 1/31/24 Budget	FYE 1/31/23 Budget	FYE 1/31/23 Actual
Total Revs	\$1,095,034	\$1,036,258	\$1,158,390	\$1,460,408
Total Exps	\$1,095,034	\$1,021,808	\$1,157,719	\$1,230,116
Rev-Exps	\$0	\$14,450	\$671	\$230,292
% to ELCA	30%	33.83%	37.50%	41.41%
Staff Increases	3.50%			
Total Contributions	\$1,015,034	\$983,000	\$1,113,000	\$1,522,948
Total Grant Revenues	\$38,000	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$35,846
Total Program Service Revenue	\$0	\$2,200	\$2,200	\$2,331
Fund Distributions	\$32,000	\$16,822	\$21,322	-\$95,707
Total Other Revenue	\$10,000	\$13,236	\$868	-\$5,010
Total Revenues	\$1,095,034	\$1,036,258	\$1,158,390	\$1,460,408
Total Direct	\$328,450	\$366,750	\$452,350	\$432,110
Total Personnel	\$518,544	\$437,498	\$515,769	\$500,043
Total Occupancy	\$9,950	\$9,345	\$9,345	\$21,452
Total Professional Fees	\$103,690	\$92,615	\$43,855	\$93,168
Total Grants Awarded Expense	\$57,000	\$63,800	\$63,800	\$35,432
Total General and Administrative Expenses	\$77,400	\$51,800	\$72,600	\$72,081
Total Fund Member Expense			\$0	\$5,831
Total Payments to Affiliates			\$0	\$70,000
Total Expenditures	\$1,095,034	\$1,021,808	\$1,157,719	\$1,230,116

Detail	FYE 1/31/25 Proposed Budget	FYE 1/31/24 Budget	FYE 1/31/23 Budget	FYE 1/31/23 Actual
Total Revs	\$1,095,034	\$1,036,258	\$1,158,390	\$1,460,408
Total Exps	\$1,095,034	\$1,021,808	\$1,157,719	\$1,230,116
Rev-Exps	\$0	\$14,450	\$671	\$230,292
% to ELCA	30%	33.83%	37.50%	41.41%
Staff Increases	3.50%			
Revenues				
Contributions				
Contributions				
4000 - Mission Commitment Income	\$999,000	\$980,000	\$1,110,000	\$1,014,039
4601 - Global Mission Contributions			\$0	\$8,536
4604 - World Hunger Contributions by Remit			\$0	\$47,539
4605 - ELCA Disaster Relief			\$0	\$4,995
4606 - Lutheran World Relief Contributions			\$0	\$48,137
4607 - LCLC Contributions			\$0	\$4,808
4609 - Campus Ministry Contributions			\$0	\$40,509
4610 - Lutheran Homes, Clinton Contributions			\$0	\$1,353
4611 - Bishop's Discretionary Fund	\$12,034	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$4,830
4612 - Lutheran Homes Foundation Contributions			\$0	\$150
4615 - Mission Partner Contributions			\$0	\$3,190
4620 - Conference - Genesee Finger Lakes Contributions			\$0	\$825
4621 - Conference - Central Crossroads Contributions			\$0	\$775
4623 - Conference - Niagara Frontier Contributions			\$0	\$120
4626 - Conference - Southwestern Contributions			\$0	\$239,111
4627 - Lutheran Charities of Buffalo Contributions			\$0	\$5,061
4629 - Wedemeyer Outdoor Fund	\$4,000		\$0	\$98,968
Total Contributions	\$1,015,034	\$983,000	\$1,113,000	\$1,522,948
Grant Revenues				
Grant Revenue - Other				
4175 - Assembly Meal Fees Collected	\$13,000		\$0	\$35,814
4180 - Other Grant income (includes DEM grant)	\$25,000	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$0
4190 - Communications Equip Fund Income			\$0	\$32
Total Grant Revenue - Other	\$38,000	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$35,846
Total Grant Revenues	\$38,000	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$35,846
Program Service Revenue				

Revenue - Supports				
4010 - Supply Preaching Income		\$2,200	\$2,200	\$1,975
4090 - Synod ELCA Memorial Contributions			\$0	\$356
Total Revenue - Supports	\$0	\$2,200	\$2,200	\$2,331
Total Program Service Revenue	\$0	\$2,200	\$2,200	\$2,331
Fund Distributions	\$32,000	\$16,822	\$21,322	-\$95,707
Other Revenue				
4800 - Operating Fund Interest Income		\$668	\$668	\$630
4820 - Miscellaneous Income	\$10,000	\$12,568	\$200	\$140
4830 - Special Events Income		\$0	\$0	\$6,369
4850 - Special Events Expense			\$0	-\$12,150
Total Other Revenue	\$10,000	\$13,236	\$868	-\$5,010
Total Revenues	\$1,095,034	\$1,036,258	\$1,158,390	\$1,460,408
Expenditures				
Direct				
5000 - ELCA Mission Support Expense	\$299,700	\$331,500	\$416,250	\$419,911
5002 - NYSCC Grant Expense	\$8,000	\$8,500	\$8,500	\$8,500
5004 - Global Mission Exchange		\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0
5006 - Stewardship Materials	\$250	\$250	\$250	\$0
5007 - World Hunger Meeting Exp		\$300	\$350	\$0
5008 - Conferences with Clergy/AIM Exp		\$750	\$750	\$0
5013 - Faith Formation Resources	\$2,000	\$4,900	\$4,900	\$2,157
5014 - Career Evaluation of Candidates Exp	\$6,000	\$5,000	\$4,500	\$0
5015 - Candidate Background Screening	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$500
5016 - Candidacy Committee Expense	\$6,500	\$6,500	\$6,500	\$68
5017 - Miscellaneous Candidates Expense		\$500	\$650	\$975
5018 - Welcoming Event Expense	\$500	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$0
5019 - Coaching Training-Developers	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$0
5020 - Regional Renewal Team		\$300	\$300	\$0
5022 - Intentional Interim Training & Inservice		\$750	\$750	\$0
5023 - First Call Theo Educ	\$1,000		\$300	\$0
5024 - Regional 7 Expenses	\$1,500	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$0
5025 - Systems Team	\$1,000		\$350	\$0
Total Direct	\$328,450	\$366,750	\$452,350	\$432,110
Personnel				
Salary and Wages				
7000 - Pastoral Staff Salaries Expense	\$99,689	\$151,291	\$146,342	\$96,318
7010 - Pastoral Staff Housing Allow Exp	\$41,929	\$51,600	\$51,600	\$40,511
7100 - Support Staff Salary Exp	\$269,502	\$122,000	\$179,772	\$260,388
Total Salary and Wages	\$411,120	\$324,891	\$377,714	\$397,217

PR Benefits				
7040 - Pastoral Staff Pension/Health Exp	\$71,701	\$53,766	\$53,766	\$69,276
7060 - Pastoral Staff Workers Comp Ins Exp	-\$106	\$1,204	\$1,204	-\$102
7070 - Pastoral Staff NYS Disability Ins Exp	\$2,143	\$200	\$200	\$2,071
7140 - Support Staff Pension/Health Exp	\$11,256	\$26,700	\$49,467	\$10,876
7160 - Support Staff Workers Comp Ins Exp	\$54	\$946	\$946	\$53
7170 - Support Staff NYS Disability Ins Exp	\$761	\$250	\$250	\$735
7175 - Support Staff - Education	\$1,000	\$2,440	\$1,500	\$0
Total PR Benefits	\$86,810	\$85,506	\$107,333	\$82,908
PR Taxes				
7030 - Pastoral Staff Social Security Exp	\$11,040	\$15,521	\$15,143	\$10,667
7130 - Support Staff Social Sec Tax Exp	\$7,760	\$9,333	\$13,332	\$7,498
7135 - Support Staff Medicare Tax Exp	\$1,815	\$2,247	\$2,247	\$1,754
Total PR Taxes	\$20,615	\$27,101	\$30,722	\$19,918
Total Personnel	\$518,544	\$437,498	\$515,769	\$500,043
Occupancy				
8400 - Rent Expense	\$3,600	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$2,000
8420 - Multi-Peril Insurance Exp	\$4,600	\$4,595	\$4,595	\$0
8430 - Umbrella Insurance Exp	\$1,750	\$1,750	\$1,750	\$19,452
Total Occupancy	\$9,950	\$9,345	\$9,345	\$21,452
Professional Fees				
7500 - Lutheran Archives Center Grant Exp	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$5,500
7520 - Printing and Duplicating Expense	\$500	\$575	\$575	\$191
7540 - Assembly Site Fee/Adminstrative Exp	\$7,000		\$0	\$33,516
7560 - Assembly AV,Music,& Workshop Exp	\$6,000		\$0	\$16,212
7570 - Pastoral Staff Continuing Ed Exp	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$2,040	\$223
7580 - Legal/Professional Fees Expense	\$15,000	\$14,000	\$14,700	\$28,776
7600 - Computer Accting Support Expense	\$60,500	\$67,800	\$16,000	\$100
7615 - Payroll processing fees	\$1,900	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,904
7630 - Synod Council Meeting Expense	\$4,500	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$4,519
7640 - Synod Council Background Chks	\$300	\$300	\$0	-\$900
7650 - Memberships/Subscriptions Expense	\$400	\$400	\$400	\$673
7670 - Background Checks Exp	\$500	\$250	\$550	-\$235
7690 - Computer Software purchase	\$2,300	\$500	\$2,300	\$2,689
7695 - Shared Risk Fund - ELCA	\$1,290	\$1,290	\$1,290	\$0
Total Professional Fees	\$103,690	\$92,615	\$43,855	\$93,168
Grants Awarded Expense				
6001 - Lake Chautauqua Center Expense	\$12,000	\$14,000	\$14,000	\$0
6002 - Albany Campus Ministry Grant Expense	\$8,000	\$8,360	\$8,360	\$8,360
6003 - Buffalo Campus Ministry Grant Expense	\$8,000	\$8,360	\$8,360	\$7,524
6004 - Ithaca Campus Ministry Grant Expense	\$8,000	\$8,360	\$8,360	\$7,524

6005 - Rochester Campus Ministry Grant Expense	\$8,000	\$8,360	\$8,360	\$4,500
6006 - Syracuse Campus Ministry Grant Expense	\$8,000	\$8,360	\$8,360	\$7,524
6007 - United Lutheran Seminary Grant	\$5,000	\$8,000	\$8,000	\$0
Total Grants Awarded Expense	\$57,000	\$63,800	\$63,800	\$35,432
General and Administrative Expenses				
Office Supplies				
8300 - Assembly Office Expenses			\$0	\$356
8315 - Telecommunications Access Expense	\$10,000	\$9,825	\$9,000	\$10,158
8320 - Office Supplies Expense	\$1,000	\$1,750	\$1,750	\$805
8325 - Postage Expense	\$700	\$2,325	\$2,325	\$616
8335 - Small Office Equipment Expense	\$2,800	\$2,800	\$2,800	\$0
8345 - Hosting Expense	\$1,000	\$500	\$1,625	\$124
8350 - Miscellaneous Office Expense			\$200	\$29,729
8355 - Bank Service Charge Expense	\$1,000	\$1,200	\$1,200	\$2,262
Total Office Supplies	\$16,500	\$18,400	\$18,900	\$44,050
Other Expenses				
6000 - New/Renewing Congratons	\$32,900	\$32,900	\$32,900	\$0
9700 - Bishop's Discretionary Expense	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,299
Total Other Expenses	\$34,400	\$32,900	\$33,900	\$1,299
Travel Expenses				
8200 - Bishop's Travel Expense	\$10,000	\$0	\$4,000	\$9,767
8205 - Travel Exp - DEM	\$6,500	\$0	\$3,000	\$6,047
8210 - Part-Time Adjunct Staff Travel Exp	\$1,000	\$0	\$3,750	\$251
8215 - Travel Exp-Candidacy	\$2,000	\$0	\$1,650	\$2,727
8220 - Travel - Faith Formation		\$0	\$1,650	\$2,324
8225 - Bishop's Auto Expense	\$5,000	\$0	\$0	\$5,103
8230 - Auto Exp - DEM	\$1,500	\$0	\$1,550	\$512
8232 - Travel Expense - Staff	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$0
8235 - Pastoral Staff Auto Insurance Exp		\$0	\$1,300	\$0
8255 - Assembly Speakers R&B, Travel Exp			\$2,400	\$0
Total Travel Expenses	\$26,500	\$500	\$19,800	\$26,731
Total General and Administrative Expenses	\$77,400	\$51,800	\$72,600	\$72,081
Fund Member Expense (disbursements)				
6027 - First English, Syr Fund Expense			\$0	\$5,831
Total Fund Member Expense			\$0	\$5,831
Payments to Affiliates				
9410 - ELCA Disaster Fund Disbursements			\$0	\$70,000
Total Payments to Affiliates			\$0	\$70,000
Total Expenditures	\$1,095,034	\$1,021,808	\$1,157,719	\$1,230,116
Total Revenues over Expenditures	\$0	\$14,450	\$671	\$230,291

Secretary's Report, Rev. Debi Turley

Synod Assembly, June 5-6, 2022

- SA22.06.01 That the Assembly adopt the Agenda, permitting the chair to call for consideration of agenda items in the order deemed most appropriate.
- SA22.06.02 That the Assembly adopt the Rules of Procedure, found in the Pre-Assembly Materials, agreeing this is how we will conduct ourselves during Assembly.
- SA22.06.03 To end discussion on the resolution.
- SA22.06.04 To amend bylaw S7.21.02. by adding the following as paragraph number two to the bylaw:
“An additional lay voting member shall be added for congregations being served by a synod-authorized minister, by agreement of the Bishop’s office, who shall be that additional lay voting member.”
Original bylaw:
(S7.21.02 Congregations shall be entitled to one additional lay voting member at the Synod Assembly for each 250 confirmed communing members or portion thereof over 500 as reported in the most recent parochial report. Additional members from each congregation shall be equally divided between male and female except that the odd numbered member, if any, may be either male or female.)
- SA22.06.05 That the Upstate New York Synod Assembly direct the Synod Council to respond to the opioid crisis by creating a Synod Task Force on Addiction to advise how synod leaders and congregations can collaborate and form effective partnerships with state and local authorities and nongovernmental organizations.
- SA22.06.06 Resolution #4: Criteria for Election as Conference Dean
RESOLUTION FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE UPSTATE NEW YORK SYNOD ASSEMBLY
From: Approved by Central Crossroads Conference at Spring Assembly, April 2, 2022
Background: Provision S12.04 of the Upstate New York Synod Constitution states: “Conferences shall elect for their presiding officer a minister of Word and Sacrament from the conference as their dean. The dean represents the synod bishop in the conference. The term of office of the dean shall be four (4) years. The dean shall serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms.”
~WHEREAS: The role of Conference Deans in the Upstate NY Synod has been widely expanded in the past decade requiring more and more time on the part of the individual serving as Dean; and whereas the gifts needed in the call to serve as Dean are key to this role; and whereas these gifts are gifts that either a Minister of Word and Sacrament or a Minister of Word and Service may have been given; and

~WHEREAS: The CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America does not prohibit a Minister of Word and Service from being called and elected as a conference dean in any way, therefore allowing either a Minister of Word and Sacrament or a Minister of Word and Service current on the roster of the ELCA to serve as a Dean; and

~WHEREAS: The CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American states in 7.44.A19. Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word

and Sacrament, and again in 7.74.A19. Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Service, a long list of possible calls for both categories of Rostered Ministers including “Coalition and Cluster Ministry” and “Synod Ministry;” and

~WHEREAS: Deans in the Upstate New York Synod, as stated in S12.04, “represents the synod bishop in the conference” and in this synod, a portion of the dean’s compensation is allocated in the synod budget;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: that the Upstate New York Synod Constitution provision 12.04 be amended to read,

“Conferences shall elect for their presiding officer a minister of Word and Sacrament or a Minister of Word and Service from the conference and in good standing on the ELCA Roster as their dean. The dean represents the synod bishop in the conference. The term of office of the dean shall be four (4) years. The dean shall serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms.”

SA22.06.07 To adopt the 2023 Mission Plan as recommended by the Synod Council.

Synod Council Meeting June 18, 2022

SC22.06.01 To adopt the Consent Agenda.

SC22.06.02 ~WHEREAS, the Upstate New York Synod Council has authorized synodical administration for the Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Resurrection of Buffalo NY (“Resurrection - Buffalo”); NOW THEREFORE, it is RESOLVED, the following persons have been duly appointed and are currently serving as the Trustees of Resurrection - Buffalo which is now under synodical administration: Rev. Roger W. Griffiths, Jr., Susan Wloch, Rev. Jeremiah P. Smith; and it is further RESOLVED, that the sale of the real property of Resurrection - Buffalo located at 3 Doat Street, Buffalo, New York to WNY Realty LLC for a purchase price of \$601,000 is hereby ratified and approved; and it is further RESOLVED, that the Trustees, and each of them, are hereby authorized and empowered to execute and deliver such documents and take such actions as each may deem necessary or appropriate to effect the sale of the real property of Resurrection Lutheran Church on such terms as if they each may deem reasonable or appropriate.

SC22.06.03 Resolved, that the Synod Council, UNYS, approve the first year of On Leave from Call for the Rev. Hannah Benedict, effective July 11, 2022-July 10, 2023.

SC22.06.04 Resolved, that the Synod Council, UNYS, approve retirement for Minister of Word and Sacrament the Rev. Deborah Johnson, effective May 31, 2022.

SC22.06.05 Resolved, that the Synod Council, UNYS, approve the first year of On Leave from Call for the Rev. Brenda Maynor, effective July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023.

SC22.06.06 Resolved, that the Synod Council, UNYS, approve the first year of On Leave from Call for the Rev. Jo Page, effective July 17, 2022-July 16, 2023.

SC22.06.07 RESOLVED, that the Synod Council, UNYS call The Rev. Jeff Silvernail as Intentional Interim Pastor at Gilead Lutheran, Troy effective June 1, 2022-May 31, 2023.

- SC22.06.08 RESOLVED, that the Synod Council, UNYS, approve an Ecumenical Contract for The Rev. Dr. Ken Simurro, as Pastor at First Presbyterian, Bainbridge, effective August 1, 2022-July 31, 2023.
- SC22.06.09 RESOLVED, that the Synod Council, UNYS, approve an Ecumenical Contract for Naomi Sorrwar-Randall, as Priest-in-Charge at St. David’s Episcopal Church in Barneveld, NY, effective April 15, 2022-October 15, 2022.
- SC22.06.10 RESOLVED, that the UNYS Synod Council, approve the 2023 Minimum Compensation Document, effective January 1, 2023, including the following changes:
1. Minimum Compensation for Ministers of Word and Sacrament:
 - The minimum recommended Total Defined Compensation package for a new minister of Word and Sacrament (0 years of experience as an ordained minister) is increased by 5.9% from \$61,161(2022 approved minimum) to a new total of \$64,770.
 - Ministers of Word and Sacrament who have one year or more of service should receive an annual increase of \$350 in compensation each year in addition to their annual cost of living increase. Pastors with 20 or more years in rostered ministry should be given one additional week of
 - Vacation time off beginning in their 20th year of ministry. They should continue to receive the \$350 increase in compensation each year.
 - Paid time off for vacation and study leave/continuing education shall total a minimum of 6 weeks annually, including Sundays. Pastors serving in calls defined as ¾ time or less shall have 12 weeks of combined vacation and study leave annually
 - The expectation of number of hours worked by a rostered leader in a full time call in a typical week will be 40 – 45 hours.
 - The Synod encourages congregations to expect that their rostered leader will use all their vacation and continuing education time off annually to ensure that leaders have a healthy work/life balance. Should a rostered leader desire to carry over unused time off from one calendar year to the next, the request should be discussed with the Congregation Council and a decision made that reflects the needs of the congregation and their called leader.
 - Transition Pastors serving in part time calls are expected to work a minimum of 20 hours per month at a minimum compensation rate of \$35 per hour, with additional hours compensated at the same rate.
 - Ministers of Word and Sacrament who supply preach and/or preside in worship shall be compensated as follows:
 - \$175 Supply for one primary worship service
 - \$ 50 Add per additional service
 - \$125 Add for Saturday or a second day in the same week.
 2. Paid Family Leave – Congregations are encouraged to provide Paid Family Leave as set forth in New York State Paid Family Leave legislation.
- SC22.06.11 We the people of the Upstate New York Synod believe that when Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,” (Matt. 28:19) he truly meant all people, with no exceptions.

We also believe that God created people in God’s image (Gen. 1:27). God made people with astonishing diversity in innumerable combinations, because that is who God is. Because God has created us in God’s image with innumerable varieties, no list of all these diversities among us will ever be complete. But God’s reign is expansive and loving, desiring to bring all

peoples together in relationship with one another. We will do our best to be welcoming of all peoples, knowing that this work will continue until Jesus returns and the reign of God comes to its fullness.

Therefore, we extend a whole-hearted welcome to those who identify as LGBTQIA+ and those who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). We rejoice with you as you continue to share your gifts, experiences, and calling in God’s diverse church, community, and creation. We will stand with you against all forms of homophobia, transphobia, racism, white supremacy, and other discriminatory practices as we work together in anticipation of God’s reign breaking into this world.

God be with us as we journey together.

Synod Council Meeting September 17, 2022 via Zoom

- SC22.09.01 To adopt the Consent Agenda.
- SC22.09.02 To approve the retirement of Rev. Terry White effective October 1, 2022.
- SC22.09.03 To set aside \$20,000 from the remaining PPP money (forgiven) and designated for the following unbudgeted expenses:
- \$10,000 to pay for training for pastoral leaders on conflict and “Crucial Conversations” provided by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center and other organizations;
 - \$5,000 for support of pastors in the form of mini grants to enable pastors to take time away for study, refreshment and to ensure their spiritual and mental health;
 - \$5,000 for professional development for Synod staff
- SC22.09.04 To accept the Treasurer’s Report.
- SC22.09.05 WHEREAS the Synod Council, at its June 2021 meeting approved the recommendation of the Investment Committee to move management of the Synod’s investments from Morgan Stanley to Tompkins Financial; and WHEREAS the Synod is actively reconciling its investment accounts; and WHEREAS the Synod Investment Committee is without a chair and full membership; RESOLVED that the Synod Council approve continuing management of the Synod’s investments by Morgan Stanley.
- SC22.09.06 That the Synod Council, UNYS, renew the non-stipendiary call of the Rev. Jeff Kane to Syracuse University Campus, effective September 15, 2022-September 14, 2023.
- SC22.09.07 That the Synod Council, UNYS, renew the non-stipendiary call of the Rev. Jonathan Litzner to St. Paul’s, Fort Plain, effective October 1, 2022-Sept. 30, 2023.
- SC22.09.08 That the UNYS Synod Council, approve the 2023 Minimum Compensation Document, effective January 1, 2023, including the following changes:
- The minimum recommended Total Defined Compensation package for a newly ordained rostered minister (0 years of experience as an ordained minister) \$64,770 an increase of 5.9% over the 2022 amount.
 - The Total Defined Compensation for a rostered minister at our below minimum compensation would be increased by an amount equal to \$350/year of experience. (See Appendix I for a chart.)
 - Under housing: *Regarding a housing allowance for Ministers of Word and Service: tax law is unclear as to whether a Deacon can claim a housing benefit. This is due to the

relatively new status of Deacons as ordained rostered ministers. We suggest you contact a CPA who specializes in clergy taxes.

SC22.09.09 To form an Opioid Task Force with Rev. Roger Griffiths and Vicar Melissa Bedell as co-leaders.

SC22.09.10 To appoint Pam Kostbar-Jardis as a Trustee of Zion Cobblekill.

SC22.09.11 To adjourn the meeting at 10:50AM.

Synod Council Meeting November 19, 2022 via Zoom

SC22.11.01 To appoint Rev. Jonathan Deibler as Deans' Representative to Synod Council.

SC22.11.02 To approve payment of the outstanding legal bill concerning a sexual abuse lawsuit to be paid from the undesignated funds remaining from the sale of Vanderkamp.

SC22.11.03 To relocate the Synod office to Atonement Lutheran Church, Syracuse and to allocate up to \$5,000 from undesignated PPP funds for moving costs and expenses to provide security for the office space.

SC22.11.04 To approve Housing Designations for rostered Synod staff including Bishop Miller (\$22,800), Rev. Lori Kochanski (\$24,000) and Rev. Kwame Pitts (\$31,000).

SC22.11.05 To authorize Rev. Deborah L. Turley to serve a second term on the Candidacy Committee.

SC22.11.06 That the Upstate New York Synod Council authorize the following ministries to continue as SAWCs for 2023, including financial support as budgeted in the Synod budget:

- Appleseed, Syracuse
- Community of Good Neighbors, Buffalo
- Hope Lutheran, No. Greenbush
- Journey of Faith, Vestal
- Oasis, Buffalo
- South Wedge Mission, Rochester

SC22.11.07 To move forward with the Investment Committee recommendation Investment Transfer Pathway: Morgan Stanley to ELCA Foundation.

SC22.11.08 WHEREAS, the role of Dean has been expanding dramatically over the last 15 years, and WHEREAS, Deans participate in call processes, closures, mission starts, conflict resolution, discipline, listening posts, publicize process of discernment for Bishop elections, provide contact information for supply preachers, communicate, amplify, and remind people about the SAM process, FLATT offerings, and deadlines for parochial reports, resolution submissions, and registrations for Synod Assembly, ministerium gatherings, and more; and WHEREAS Deans schedule, plan, and conduct Fall and Spring Conference Assemblies; publish Dean's notes; remind about state mandates (including anti-sexual harassment training, insurance provisions for groups in the building, and concealed carry laws); and facilitate clergy communication, among many other tasks of the conference, and WHEREAS, Deans are now Synod staff with insight and participation in all of the above across the Synod, often outside their conference geography, and WHEREAS, The work of a Dean is a significant expansion of call,
BE IT RESOLVED,

The process for selecting a Dean be clarified and standardized by:

1. Conferences initiating the new Dean process by seeking nominations for Dean and ascertaining their willingness to accept office (analogous to Entrance in the call process).
2. Nominees will update their Rostered Minister Profile online and submit it for endorsement by the current Deans and Bishop's staff. (Majority vote)
3. The Rostered Minister Profile will be viewed by current Deans and Bishop's staff (analogous to Endorsement in the call process).
4. The endorsed candidates' short form of the Rostered Minister Profile will be forwarded to the conference 30 days before the date of the election.
5. Conference elects a Dean (ecclesiastical vote, 2/3)

- SC22.11.09 To refer the Resolution for LGBTQIA2S Seat on Synod Council to the Ad Hoc Reference and Counsel Task Force for a recommendation to the Synod Council.
- SC22.11.10 To approve the contract with Bethany Baptist Church as the site for the 2023 Synod Assembly.
- SC22.11.11 To move the Continuing Resolution to the ELCA Church Council.
- SC22.11.12 To adopt Amendments to the Constitution for Synods as approved by the 2022 Churchwide Assembly.
- SC22.11.13 To approve the first year of On Leave from Call Status for Minister of Word and Sacrament, The Rev. Sara Litzner, effective November 1, 2022 – October 31, 2023.
- SC22.11.14 To approve the first year of On Leave from Call Status for Minister of Word and Sacrament The Rev. Roger Berens, with stipulations approved by Synod Council, effective November 21, 2022 – November 20, 2023.

Synod Council Special Meeting January 8, 2023 via Zoom

- SC23.01.01 That the Upstate New York Synod join as an amicus on briefs filed on behalf of religious stakeholders urging the Court to vacate the preliminary injunction issued by the District Court and permit New York to enforce the Place of Worship Provision.

Synod Council Meeting January 14, 2023 via Zoom

- SC23.01.01 To adopt the Consent Agenda.
- SC23.01.02 To approve retirement, for Minister of Word and Sacrament, The Rev. Deborah Turley, effective January 31, 2023.
- SC23.01.03 To approve retirement, for Minister of Word and Sacrament, The Rev. Rick Eddy, effective January 1, 2023.
- SC23.01.04 To approve the first year of On Leave from Call for Minister of Word and Sacrament, The Rev. Susan Feurzeig, effective January 1, 2023.
- SC23.01.05 To acknowledge the contracts of pastors from full communion ecumenical partners serving ELCA congregations, including:
 Elberfeld, Richard (EC-USA) St. Mark, Mayville (SW)
 Long, Jennifer (UCC) Emanuel Lutheran, Corning, NY (ST)
 Roberts, Rachel (UCC) Evangelical, Orleans; St. Paul's, Redwood (CC)
 Rossi, Kim (EC-USA) Bethany, Olean (SW)
 Thompson, Eric (EC-USA) St. Paul's, Dansville (GF)
 Vogel-Polizzi, Virginia (EC-USA) St. Peter, Malta (HM)
 *Wilder, Clara (UCC) Tri-Church, Brocton (SW)
 *Williams, Peter (EC-USA) Grace and Holy Spirit, Cortland (CC)
 *These pastors are called through their own church body
- SC23.01.06 To approve a full-time ecumenical contract as pastor to First Presbyterian Church. Jamestown, for Minister of Word and Sacrament the Rev. Tara Eastman, effective 1/10/2023.
- SC23.01.07 To grant available Upstate New York Synod seminarian scholarship funds for the 2023 spring semester, for CPE training, books or other expenses, as follows:
 Winter-Rowen: Gerry Zimmerman \$475.00
 McNary: Lisa Frauens \$855.84
 Perry-Kopp: Rachel Sosebee \$1800.00

Melissa Bedell \$900.00
Diana Foote \$900.00
Teresa O'Connor \$900.00

- SC23.01.08 That all Morgan Stanley accounts, including, but not limited to Acct. 411206626, have the following signatories: Bishop Lee M. Miller II, Key Controller; H. Todd Eames; Thomas Madden; Julie Grindle; and that the following names be permanently removed as signatories: Fred Risser; Karen Eadon; Pr. John Macholz.
- SC23.01.09 To extend a Special Call to Protestant Campus Ministry, Albany, as Chaplain, to Minister of Word and Sacrament, the Rev. Rebecca Ehrlich, effective February 1, 2023-January 31, 2027.
- SC23.01.10 To adopt the first three suggested changes (S6.02.d.A99, S11.01.A04, S11.01.04.B01) recommended by the SAM Executive Committee, and to move the amendment to the bylaw(S7.21.03) to the 2023 Synod Assembly.
- SC23.01.11 To refer the Jubilee USA Memorial Resolution to the ad hoc Reference and Counsel Task Force.
- SC23.01.12 To authorize Bishop Miller and Vice President Thomas Madden to appoint an ad hoc Reference and Counsel Task Force.

Synod Council Retreat March 17-18, 2023

- SC23.03.01 To adopt the Consent Agenda
- SC23.03.02 To approve the Retired Rostered Leaders Roster dated March 2023
- SC23.03.03 To direct the Treasurer to research where the LCLC Investment is located in the Synod Investment portfolio, so that it can then be decided how much money can be returned to LCLC.
- SC23.03.04 To grant the first year of On Leave from Call status, to Minister of Word and Sacrament, The Rev. Jackie Jefferson, effective March 13, 2023-March 12, 2024.
- SC23.03.05 To grant the first year of On Leave from Call status to Minister of Word and Sacrament, The Rev. Laura Daly, effective June 1, 2023-May 31, 2024.
- SC23.03.06 To grant the first year of On Leave from Call status to Minister of Word and Service, Deacon Lee Lindemann, effective February 4, 2023-February 12, 2024.
- SC23.03.07 To grant the first year of On Leave from Call status to Minister of Word and Sacrament, The Rev. Laurie Carson, effective February 13, 2023-February 3, 2024.
- SC23.03.08 To grant the first year of On Leave from Call status to Minister of Word and Sacrament, The Rev. Lori Kochanski effective February 16, 2023-February 15, 2024.
- SC23.03.09 That the Synod Council approve distribution of available funds among the Synod's eligible seminary students, from the Upstate New York Synod Fund for Leaders to total not more than \$5700, and from the Rev. F. Charles Schwartz, Jr. Seminarian Scholarship Fund, to total not more than \$4500, for the 2023-2024 academic year.

- SC23.03.10 To approve the Synod Assembly registration cost at \$150/person for voters and \$50/day for visitors. This cost includes dinner on Friday, lunch on Saturday, and social time Friday evening; rental of the space; and all sundry costs related to worship, voting, Wifi, ASL, hotel comps, etc.
- SC23.03.11 To affirm recommendation from the Synod Assembly Planning Team to comply with the 60/40 ratio for the Synod Assembly as outlined in the Synod Constitution.
- SC23.03.12 To affirm the strategic Ministry Grant recommendation for Sanctuary Binghamton
- SC23.03.13 To approve the inclusion of the listed congregations for application for the ELCA Digital Ministry Grant:
 The Rev. Susan Salomone - St. Michael (Central Crossroads)
 The Rev. Matthew Nicoloff - South Wedge Mission (GFL)
 Vicar Melissa Beddell - Grace (Foothills)
 The Rev. Dustin Wright - Messiah (Hudson Mohawk)
 The Rev. Roger Griffith - Zion, Clarence (Niagara Frontier)
 The Rev. Jason Churchill - St. Luke (Southern Tier)
 The Rev. Phillip Roushey - Zion (Southwestern)
- SC23.03.14 To extend a Special Call to Bethany Lutheran, Elmira as Intentional Interim, to Minister of Word and Sacrament, The Rev. Daniel May, effective May 1, 2023-April 30, 2025.
- SC23.03.15 To extend the Intentional Interim call to Gilead, Brunswick, to Minister of Word and Sacrament, The Rev. Jeff Silvernail, effective June 1, 2023-Dec. 31, 2023
- SC23.03.16 To present the budget proposal for the 2024 Mission Plan to the Synod Assembly in June of 2023.
- SC23.03.17 To allow a Synodically Authorized Worshiping Community voice and vote at Synod Assembly, equal to that of an established congregation.
- SC23.03.18 That the LBGTQ+ resolution revised by Reference and Council be presented to the Synod Assembly in June 2023.
- SC23.03.19 The Synod Council of the Upstate New York Synod resolves the 2023 Assembly of the Upstate New York Synod to:
- Actively promote the passage of the “NY Taxpayer and International Debt Crises Act” and advocate on its behalf;
 - Memorialize the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran in America to reaffirm its support of the Jubilee USA Network in an updated Social Policy Resolution.
- SC23.03.20 That a Special meeting of the Synod Council be scheduled to consider the changes to the Synod Constitution.

Memorials & Resolutions

2023 Resolutions at Synod Assembly

Resolution #1: Criteria for Election as Conference Dean

SA22.06.06 Approved 2022, First Vote

RESOLUTION FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE UPSTATE NEW YORK SYNOD ASSEMBLY

From: Approved by Central Crossroads Conference at Spring Assembly, April 2, 2022 Background: Provision S12.04 of the Upstate New York Synod Constitution states:

“Conferences shall elect for their presiding officer a minister of Word and Sacrament from the conference as their dean. The dean represents the synod bishop in the conference. The term of office of the dean shall be four (4) years. The dean shall serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms.”

~WHEREAS: The role of Conference Deans in the Upstate NY Synod has been widely expanded in the past decade requiring more and more time on the part of the individual serving as Dean; and whereas the gifts needed in the call to serve as Dean are key to this role; and whereas these gifts are gifts that either a Minister of Word and Sacrament or a Minister of Word and Service may have been given; and

~WHEREAS: The CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America does not prohibit a Minister of Word and Service from being called and elected as a conference dean in any way, therefore allowing either a Minister of Word and Sacrament or a Minister of Word and Service current on the roster of the ELCA to serve as a Dean; and

~WHEREAS: The CONSTITUTION, BYLAWS, AND CONTINUING RESOLUTIONS of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American states in 7.44.A19. Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, and again in 7.74.A19. Sources of Calls for Ministers of Word and Service, a long list of possible calls for both categories of Rostered Ministers including

“Coalition and Cluster Ministry” and “Synod Ministry;” and

~WHEREAS: Deans in the Upstate New York Synod, as stated in S12.04, “represents the synod bishop in the conference” and in this synod, a portion of the dean’s compensation is allocated in the synod budget;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: that the Upstate New York Synod Constitution provision 12.04 be amended to read,

“Conferences shall elect for their presiding officer a minister of Word and Sacrament or a Minister of Word and Service from the conference and in good standing on the ELCA Roster as their dean. The dean represents the synod bishop in the conference. The term of office of the dean shall be four (4) years. The dean shall serve no more than two (2) consecutive terms.”

The 2023 Synod Assembly will take a second vote on this resolution. No changes are allowed at this time per the Synod Constitution and Bylaws.

Resolution #2

SC23.01.10 To adopt the first three suggested changes (S6.02.d.A99, S11.01.A04, S11.01.04.B01) recommended by the SAM Executive Committee, and to move the amendment to the bylaw (S7.21.03) to the 2023 Synod Assembly.

Resolution #3

SC23.03.17 To allow a Synodically Authorized Worshiping Community voice and vote at Synod Assembly, equal to that of an established congregation.

Resolution #4: LGBTQIA2S+ Seat on Synod Council

Reference and Counsel Report – Synod Council March 2023

There were two recommendations for language changes in the resolution itself, and our proposed constitutional changes are included. We believe this should go to the Assembly with these small language changes in resolution for clarity.

Original resolution with Reference and Counsel recommendations noted in red:

WHEREAS the mission of the Upstate New York Synod (ELCA) is to support vibrant congregations and healthy leaders through expanding communication, encouraging collaboration, and fostering innovation and **the** mission of the Synod includes a desire to expand communication and encourage collaboration; and

WHEREAS the Synod ~~purports~~ **aspires** to welcome and support members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, 2 Spirit, etcetera (LGBTQIA2S+) community; and

WHEREAS the Synod Council supports the mission of Upstate New York Synod (ELCA); and

WHEREAS the Synod Council engages in shared decision-making on issues related to the health of congregations; and

WHEREAS people who identify as LGBTQIA2S+ are members of ELCA congregations; and

WHEREAS it is desirable that any and all communication and collaboration shall include the voices of individuals from the LGBTQIA2S+ community, and decisions shall be informed by the lived experiences of members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: the Synod Council shall have in its membership a seat designated for a person who identifies as LGBTQIA2S+, and that the Synod Constitution be amended to reflect this.

Suggested constitutional changes

S10.07.01. Conferences shall nominate individuals for election to the Synod Council in accordance with the following table:

Hudson-Mohawk Conference [one] member Foothills Conference [one] member Central Crossroads Conference [one] member Southern Tier Conference [one] member Genesee Finger Lakes Conference [one] member Niagara Frontier Conference [one] member Southwestern Conference [one] member

In addition, all conferences shall nominate one person of color and/or primary language other than English with two to be elected at large by the Synod Assembly as provided in SB/L10.07.B. Conferences ~~also~~ shall nominate one youth, age 16 – 18, and one young adult, age 18 – 30, with one youth, and one young adult to be elected at large by the Synod Assembly as provided in SB/L10.07.B **Conferences also shall nominate one person [from] the LGBTQIA2S+ community, with one person [from] the LGBTQIA2S+ community to be elected at large by the Synod Assembly as provided in SB/L10.07.B**

S10.07.02. The following provisions shall govern the election of the two at-large lay persons of color or primary language other than English, one youth, age 16 – 18, and one young adult, age 18 – 30, **and one person [from] the LGBTQIA2S+ community** to serve as Synod Council members.

- a. Each conference shall nominate one person of color or primary language other than English, one youth, one young adult **and one person [from] the LGBTQIA2S+ community** for consideration by the Synod Assembly.
- b. The Synod Assembly shall elect two persons of color or primary language other than English at least one of whom shall be lay, and one youth, one young adult, **and one person [from] the LGBTQIA2S+ community** from the nominees for each at-large seat. At least one of the youth or young adults elected must be a lay person.
- c. In an effort to ensure diversity, should it be necessary and only in the case of the at-large nominees, the Synod Assembly may accept floor nominations of persons of color or primary language other than English, and one youth, **and one young adult, and one person [from] the LGBTQIA2S+ community** for consideration by the Synod Assembly.

SC23.03.18 Resolved that the LBGTO+ resolution revised by Reference and Council be presented to the Synod Assembly in June 2023 (below).

WHEREAS the mission of the Upstate New York Synod (ELCA) is to support vibrant congregations and healthy leaders through expanding communication, encouraging collaboration, and fostering innovation and the mission of the Synod includes a desire to expand communication and encourage collaboration; and

WHEREAS the Synod aspires to welcome and support members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, 2 Spirit, etcetera (LGBTQIA2S+) community; and

WHEREAS the Synod Council supports the mission of Upstate New York Synod (ELCA); and

WHEREAS the Synod Council engages in shared decision-making on issues related to the health of congregations; and

WHEREAS people who identify as LGBTQIA2S+ are members of ELCA congregations; and

WHEREAS it is desirable that any and all communication and collaboration shall include the voices of individuals from the LGBTQIA2S+ community, and decisions shall be informed by the lived experiences of members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT: the Synod Council shall have in its membership a seat designated for a person who identifies as LGBTQIA2S+, and that the Synod Constitution be amended to reflect this.

Suggested constitutional changes

S10.07.01. Conferences shall nominate individuals for election to the Synod Council in accordance with the following table:

Hudson-Mohawk Conference [one] member Foothills Conference [one] member Central Crossroads Conference [one] member Southern Tier Conference [one] member Genesee Finger Lakes Conference [one] member Niagara Frontier Conference [one] member Southwestern Conference [one] member

In addition, all conferences shall nominate one person of color and/or primary language other than English with two to be elected at large by the Synod Assembly as provided in SB/L10.07.B. Conferences ~~also~~ shall nominate one youth, age 16 – 18, and one young adult, age 18 – 30, with one youth, and one young adult to be elected at large by the Synod Assembly as provided in SB/L10.07.B. Conferences also shall nominate one person [from] the LGBTQIA2S+ community, with one person [from] the LGBTQIA2S+ community to be elected at large by the Synod Assembly as provided in SB/L10.07.B

S10.07.02. The following provisions shall govern the election of the two at-large lay persons of color or primary language other than English, one youth, age 16 – 18, and one young adult, age 18 – 30, and one person [from] the LGBTQIA2S+ community to serve as Synod Council members.

- a. Each conference shall nominate one person of color or primary language other than English, one youth, one young adult and one person [from] the LGBTQIA2S+ community for consideration by the Synod Assembly.
- b. The Synod Assembly shall elect two persons of color or primary language other than English at least one of whom shall be lay, and one youth, one young adult, and one person [from] the LGBTQIA2S+ community from the nominees for each at-large seat. At least one of the youth or young adults elected must be a lay person.
- c. In an effort to ensure diversity, should it be necessary and only in the case of the at-large nominees, the Synod Assembly may accept floor nominations of persons of color or primary language other than English, and one youth, and one young adult, and one person [from] the LGBTQIA2S+ community for consideration by the Synod Assembly.

Resolution #5: Jubilee Resolution



Hudson Mohawk Conference Evangelical Lutheran Church in America God's work. Our hands.

Resolution of the Autumn 2022 Hudson Mohawk Conference Assembly:

“Supporting the NY Taxpayer and International Debt Crises Protection Act”

Whereas the 1999 ELCA Social Statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* states,

“When a developing country becomes heavily indebted, the poorest are usually the most adversely affected. A huge share of a country's income must be used to pay off debt, which may have been incurred unjustly or under corrupt rulers. Structural adjustment programs to pay off debt typically divert funds from much needed educational, health, and environmental efforts, and from infrastructures for economic development;” ([pg. 6](#))

Whereas the 1999 ELCA Social Statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* further

states, “We call for... reduction of overwhelming international debt burdens in ways that do not impose further deprivations on the poor, and cancellation of some or all debt where severe indebtedness immobilizes a country's economy;” ([pg. 7](#))

Whereas the 1999 ELCA Social Policy Resolution CA99.03.06 *Jubilee 2000: USA Campaign*

resolves to, “To express support for the work of the Jubilee 2000: USA Campaign promoting education and advocacy on international debt issues and to affirm continued ELCA participation in the Jubilee 2000: USA Campaign;” ([pg. 1](#))

Whereas the current [Jubilee USA Network](#) grew out of the Jubilee 2000: USA Campaign;

Whereas [according to the International Monetary Fund](#), “the proportion of countries in debt distress or at high risk of debt distress, has doubled to 60 from 2015 levels” and that debt is increasingly held by private creditors;

Whereas over [50% of the world's debt](#) held by private creditors is contracted under New York State law;

Whereas passing A10595, the “NY Taxpayer and International Debt Crises Protection Act”

through the New York State legislature is a [key legislative priority](#) of the Jubilee USA Network;

Whereas the [stated purpose of A10595](#) is to, “To promote effective and orderly sovereign

debt restructuring for countries suffering from the pandemic, health, and economic crises, achieve equitable burden-sharing between public and private creditors, address economic and supply chain shocks, prevent financial system disruption, and protect NY taxpayers;” now, therefore, be it

Resolved that the Hudson Mohawk Conference of the Upstate New York Synod will:

- Actively promote the passage of the “NY Taxpayer and International Debt Crises Act” and advocate on its behalf;
- Urge its congregations and their members and rostered leaders to actively promote the passage of the “NY Taxpayer and International Debt Crises Act” and advocate on its behalf;

Resolved that the Hudson Mohawk Conference of the Upstate New York Synod urges the Synod Council, Bishop and Staff of the Upstate New York Synod to:

- Actively promote the passage of the “NY Taxpayer and International Debt Crises Act” and advocate on its behalf;
- Urge ecumenical and interfaith partners, particularly judicatory leaders, to actively promote the passage of the “NY Taxpayer and International Debt Crises Act” and advocate on its behalf;
- Urge congregations of the Upstate New York Synod to actively promote the passage of the “NY Taxpayer and International Debt Crises Act” and advocate on its behalf;
- Partner with the Council, Bishop and Staff of the Metro New York Synod to actively promote the passage of the “NY Taxpayer and International Debt Crises Act” and advocate on its behalf;
- Work with the Lutheran Office for World Community, ELCA Advocacy, the New York State Council of Churches and other relevant entities to provide educational opportunities for ELCA congregations and their members to learn about the sovereign debt crisis;

**Memorial of the Autumn 2022 Hudson Mohawk Conference Assembly:
“Supporting the NY Taxpayer and International Debt Crises Protection Act”**

Whereas the 1999 ELCA Social Statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* states,

“When a developing country becomes heavily indebted, the poorest are usually the most adversely affected. A huge share of a country’s income must be used to pay off debt, which may have been incurred unjustly or under corrupt rulers. Structural adjustment programs to pay off debt typically divert funds from much needed educational, health, and environmental efforts, and from infrastructures for economic development;” [\(pg. 6\)](#)

Whereas the 1999 ELCA Social Statement *Sufficient, Sustainable Livelihood for All* further

states, “We call for... reduction of overwhelming international debt burdens in ways that do not impose further deprivations on the poor, and cancellation of some or all debt where severe indebtedness immobilizes a country’s economy;” [\(pg. 7\)](#)

Whereas the 1999 ELCA Social Policy Resolution CA99.03.06 *Jubilee 2000: USA Campaign*

resolves to, “To express support for the work of the Jubilee 2000: USA Campaign promoting education and advocacy on international debt issues and to affirm continued ELCA participation in the Jubilee 2000: USA Campaign;” [\(pg. 1\)](#)

Whereas the current [Jubilee USA Network](#) grew out of the Jubilee 2000: USA Campaign;

Whereas [according to the International Monetary Fund](#), “the proportion of countries in debt

distress or at high risk of debt distress, has doubled to 60 from 2015 levels” and that debt is increasingly held by private creditors;

Whereas over [50% of the world's debt](#) held by private creditors is contracted under New York State law;

Whereas passing A10595, the “NY Taxpayer and International Debt Crises Protection Act”

through the New York State legislature is a [key legislative priority](#) of the Jubilee USA Network;

Whereas the [stated purpose of A10595](#) is to, “To promote effective and orderly sovereign

debt restructuring for countries suffering from the pandemic, health, and economic crises, achieve equitable burden-sharing between public and private creditors, address economic and supply chain shocks, prevent financial system disruption, and protect NY taxpayers;” now, therefore, be it

Resolved that the Hudson Mohawk Conference of the Upstate New York Synod memorializes the 2023 Assembly of the Upstate New York Synod to:

- Actively promote the passage of the “NY Taxpayer and International Debt Crises Act” and advocate on its behalf;
- Memorialize the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran in America to reaffirm its support of the Jubilee USA Network in an updated Social Policy Resolution.

Reference and Counsel Report – Synod Council March 2023

It was first noted that A10595 failed to move out of the Assembly Judiciary Committee in 2022. David Truland noted that the bill has been introduced in the NYS Senate as S4747 in 2023. Subsequent checking finds that it is now re-introduced as A2970 in the Assembly. It resides in the Judiciary committee of both houses as of March 2023. Should this resolution go forward to the Synod Assembly, the new bill numbers will need to be added.

In discussion, the committee was not inclined to take this resolution to the assembly or see it memorialized and sent on to churchwide. The Synod Council can support the principle by reaffirming our commitment to Jubilee 2000 and pass that on to churchwide. Action supporting the principle of the resolution could come from the Synod Council or an appropriate Synod-wide committee without the necessity of coming to the floor of the Assembly. It was suggested that the issue, proposed law, and request for support could be included in the Synod Pre-Assembly packet.

Action: The Resolution has been received and reviewed. The Committee does not feel it is necessary to present this for a general vote at Synod Assembly but recommends that Synod Council approve the principle of the resolution and take such action after as they deem appropriate.

SC23.03.19 The Synod Council of the Upstate New York Synod resolves the 2023 Assembly of the Upstate New York Synod to:

- **Actively promote the passage of the “NY Taxpayer and International Debt Crises Act” and advocate on its behalf;**
- **Memorialize the Church Council of the Evangelical Lutheran in America to reaffirm its support of the Jubilee USA Network in an updated Social Policy Resolution.**

Synod Staff 2023 Annual Reports

Associate with the Bishop for Candidacy, Roster Care, and Mobility, Julie Grindle

Candidacy

The Candidacy Committee and Area Interview Teams provide discernment, accompaniment and decision-making to form faithful, competent and healthy rostered ministers to lead Christ's church and its mission. As of April 2023 there are eight candidates in preparation for rostered ministry, with one applicant. We have both full-time and part-time students; all are engaged in Distributed Learning pathways. Some of our candidates are completing their formation while serving in congregations of our synod.

There are three necessary decisions during the course of candidacy: Entrance, admitting an applicant to the formation process of candidacy; Endorsement, affirming a candidate's competence and call midway through; and Approval, which is required to be eligible for a first call and ordination, near the end of the candidacy and formation processes. In 2022-23, two candidates were Approved for rostered ministry: The Rev. Meghan James and The Rev. Chuck Copps and have since been ordained. Two candidates were Entranced: Melissa Bedell (TEEM) and Rachel Sosebee.

We have Synod-specific candidacy scholarships available (awarded in the winter) and Fund for Leaders scholarships in the spring, facilitated by the ELCA Fund for Leaders. Both of these are a result of your generosity, whether it be a personal gift, or the mission support of a congregation.

The candidacy work of discernment and decision-making is shared by many people in our synod. Two Area Interview Teams do the important ministry of discernment with applicants prior to Entrance one in the east and one in the west. We are working to add new members to the Area Teams. Along with Bishop Miller, Pr. Becky Resch, ELCA deployed candidacy staff, and Pr. Maria Erling of United Lutheran Seminary, current members of the Candidacy Committee are: Pr. John Scarafia, Chair; Pr. Imani Olear, DEM and Associate with the Bishop; David Ekimoff; Pr. John Ferrie; Julie Grindle; Pr. Sohail Akhtar; Steve Harris; Pr. Debbie Johnson; Carina Meyer; Pr. Jamie Retallack; Ann Siegle Drege; and Pr. Debi Turley. Pr. Johanna Rehbaum and Pr. Jonathan Deibler have served as Chaplain for our retreats. I give deep thanks to all for their diligent and faithful service.

Roster Care

It is a joy for me to work with rostered leaders in our Synod, whether it is discernment in their call, a move to another congregation, or helping them navigate a transition to On Leave From Call or retirement. I maintain our Synod directory, communicate with rostered ministers as needed, and am the ELCA liaison on their behalf. I also facilitate meetings between our leaders and the Bishop, and produce special mailings on their behalf, including anniversaries, etc. I am most thankful for Rachel Sosebee, who has taken on Mobility since last year, and Lisa Frauens who does behind-the-scenes admin work.

Administration

Administration has become a central role for me as we shift our staff responsibilities. Everything from managing the Bishop's schedule to working with Synod Council; helping with SAM letters and First Call technical work on behalf of our Synod; to working on events, including Synod Assembly, Synod Ministerium, retreats and special worship services.

My work is different every day, and I'm most thankful for the support of my staff colleagues, including Bishop Miller, Pr. Olear and the Deans. We are working hard for the congregations and rostered leaders in our wonderful Synod every day, and hope to continue to build trust in every encounter as we work in Christ's vineyard together.

Soli Deo Gloria! *Julie Grindle*

Assistant to the Bishop for Synod Life and Learning, the Rev. Lori Kochanski

Annual Report 2022/Farewell in 2023

2022 Ministry Report

Some particular areas of ministry in 2022 included **administration** (*synod assembly registration, communication, adaptive thinking practices, attendance with voice at synod council meetings and retreat*), **leadership support with lay members and rostered leaders** (*i.e. Faithful Learning and Teaching Together [FLATT], Synod Authorized Ministry [SAM], First Call Gatherings, Grace Gathering*), **strategic thinking in congregations with the Abide process and fostering spiritual practices** (*9@9, blog*)

The **FLATT** (Faithful Learning and Teaching Together) classes continue to reach a variety of leaders across the synod. It is a joy to offer opportunity for folks from many congregations to meet together for learning and sharing.

After many years of work and conversation our **Synod Authorized Ministry** program was officially re-booted with updated handbooks and a formal process of review. Great thanks to all who have contributed to this work. Special thanks to Bishop Miller and the Steering Committee as we move forward with new processes. Deep gratitude for those who continue to serve as both Assigned and Certified Synod Authorized Ministers along with the mentors who walk with them.

I have developed the **Abide** process from an observed need across the congregations in our synod to be able to take critical look at who they are as a community and how they want to move forward together. I have had the privilege to work with an additional five congregations in 2022. Through this several month process we ask critical questions about the needs of a congregation and wonder together how to do the work of being the church in this century. The outcome of the process is varied in each setting, but the core value is always a desire to be who God wants us to be right now. I will continue my work with some of those congregations into the new year and have plans to begin this relationship in new congregations in 2023.

In 2022 I continued to serve as the coordinator of our **First Call Ministry Program**. Rostered leaders in their first call continued to meet via Zoom with colleagues in Metro New York to learn from one another and special guests. It was often a time of listening and supporting one another in ministry. We hope to continue to build this partnership between the leaders in both Metro and Upstate New York. We are stronger together.

So much of what I do is act as a supporting member to those on staff and in congregations. In addition to direct support with lay leaders, I have been blessed to work with the staff of specialists, deans, Julie Grindle, Pastor Imani Olear and Bishop Lee Miller II. I look forward to continued service in areas where there is a general need that matches my gifts and skills. I am especially looking forward to developing more resources for leaders in congregations so that all feel good about the ways they are using their particular gifts and skills for the sake of the Gospel in the world.

Pastor Kochanski resigned her call in January 2023. She shared these words and blessing as she was departing this office and call:

I am resigning my call as an Assistant to the Bishop for Synod Life and Learning. I have accepted a position with the city of Albany in the new Department of Neighborhood and Community Services. I will be one of five Neighborhood Specialists. Since it is a brand new position, for the city and for me, I don't know exactly what my day to day work will look like. What I do know is that in ways both small and big my 21 years as a Minister of Word and Sacrament in the ELCA have certainly prepared me for the work of neighbor justice with equity.

When I moved to Upstate New York in the fall of 2017 I was blessed to be called as the Director of Faith Formation. Over the past five years my title has changed a few times, but my commitment to serve to the best of my ability has remained unwavering.

As I reflect on our work together I especially cherish the relationships I have formed through the online FLATT courses, the Abide program, 9@9 and other opportunities for faith practice. I am proud of the collaborative work around the Synod Authorized Ministry program. I have learned so much with you.

Thank you to both Bishop Miller and Bishop Macholz, along with so many dear colleagues in the Office of the Bishop, for the ways we have worked together with mutual respect, joy and heaps of humor.

I remember the first time I drove across the state for a retreat in Canandaigua. I was moved by the beauty of the land. At that point I did not know anyone who lived at the end of the exit ramps along the interstate. It feels good to know that just a few years later I know many the people who call those places home. While I am still taken by the beauty I also make a practice of praying for individuals and congregations and institutions all along the way. And I will continue to hold you in prayer for all of your daily work and living.

A Blessing for the Way

*God, lover of our hearts, opener of our spirits, dweller of the deep...
hold us fast, enfold us quick*

*Jesus, joy-giver, peace-restorer, lover of the pieces...
shift our feet, direct the way, peel back the fingers of our clenched hands*

*Spirit, releaser of life, surprise maker, mover of rocks...
release us into the next*

Associate with the Bishop, Director of Evangelical Mission, the Rev. Imani Olear

Synod Assembly Report DEM/ Associate with the Bishop

Phyllis Stephens (American, 1955-),
High and Lifted Up, 2020.



Cotton fabric, 57 x 33 in. Private collection. Courtesy of the artist and Richard Beavers Gallery, New York.

“To **engage**, **equip**, and **empower** God’s people to love and serve.”
Rev. Imani Olear

Call Synopsis:

The Director for Evangelical Mission (DEM) is the person in each synod who has primary responsibility for helping the church engage new people, as well as, those currently worshipping in our congregations. The largest portion of the call as DEM is to first journey alongside existing and new Mission Developers of UPNYS. The second largest area is with the work with local congregations around Congregational Vitality and inviting them to follow the way of Jesus and discover community, justice, and love. The final aspect of the DEM position is around grant possibilities for our congregations and/or leaders from the ELCA, but only after discussion around mission.

As the Associate with the Bishop for Justice Ministries I work directly with the current established justice ministries, which include, Racial, Gender and Hunger, with the expectation to begin developing new justice related ministries around Creation Care, Disabilities and Advocacy. The other areas that are in my portfolio includes, Stewardship and First Call Theological Education.



Mission Development

The five (5) Mission Development locations in our synod include:

- Appleseed (Syracuse NY) Rev. Dana Smith
- Community of Good Neighbors (Buffalo NY) Rev. Kwame Pitts
- Hope Lutheran (Troy NY) Rev. Pamela Hoh
- Journey of Faith (Vestal NY) Todd Eames
- Oasis (Buffalo NY) Rev. Kwame Pitts
 - LUMIN - Buffalo Campus Ministries - Rev. Kwame Pitts
- South Wedge Mission (Rochester NY) Rev. Matthew Nicoloff

Synopsis:

Appleseed - they have continued to serve the community and have started the move to be their own fiscal agents when it comes to grants from the ELCA. Their meal/grocery ministry serves as an outreach to families in the Syracuse area .

CGN - The Blizzard of 2022 hit this community hard, including their facility being burglarized and the need to find ways to replace items that were stolen due to lack of insurance. This was

Synod Assembly Report DEM/ Associate with the Bishop

one of the biggest hurdles for this mission site that has limited income and their "membership" is not based on "giving units."

Hope Lutheran - one of the programs of note is their "blessing bags" with donations supplied by the congregation. These bags contain personal care items, socks, gloves, hats, granola bars and other items that would be useful to a homeless person. The bags are taken by the congregation members for distribution to homeless people we encounter around town.

Journey of Faith - Our newest mission development was birthed out of Christ the King in Vestal NY. As a SAWC they are currently moving through the seven areas of discernment to assess the potential and readiness which is essential for launching a new ministry. Those areas are: area potential, compelling vision (completed), clear ministry plan, adaptive leadership, contextual models, adequate resources and good support mechanisms.

Oasis/ LUMIN - Oasis continues (also in collaboration with CGN) Rev. Kwame Pitts as the Mission Developer and Campus Pastor for the University of Buffalo have found ways to connect to young people that may be on a journey of discovery of their spirituality.

SWM - the leadership have worked so hard during a difficult transition from the pandemic of COVID and the difficulties of the racial trauma in the community. They have become a safe and brave space for the south wedge community and a work towards healing spiritual trauma.

Next Steps:

The biggest next step is the organization of SWM to become a fully established worshipping community. Their team has begun working internally and with the synod to work through governance, budgeting and leadership possibilities of committees for structure.

Mission Planning



As people of faith, we trust that God is doing a new thing in the world and we long to be part of this work. Mission planning is the process of discovering how your congregation is called to live as the body of Christ. Assessing **congregational vitality** can help focus mission plans to capitalize on strengths and address challenges within congregations. Two congregations are currently in this process, with a third completing their assessment to determine next steps.

Interested in seeing your congregations numbers email me at imani.olear@elca.org

Synod Assembly Report DEM/ Associate with the Bishop

Time, Talent and Resources

SYNOD Coaching Ministry Development/ Redevelopment has begun in conjunction with the Chicago office. Leaders have this resource available to help with intentional and defined relationship in which a trained coach uses powerful questions, strategic listening and accountability to uncover and utilize one's own strengths and insights to accomplish one's goals.

Coaching has many applications for ministry in the church:

- Starting new ministries or congregations
- Congregational vitality growth work
- Councils and other leadership teams in times of pastoral transition or intentional
- goal setting and planning
- Stewardship
- Discipleship
- Leadership development (both professional and lay, i.e. new council presidents, beginning or ending a call)
- Children, Youth, and Family ministries

Lake Institute: Religious Fundraising - A resource for our synod has been the training around fundraising for our congregations. This is completed through the DEM office by working with the congregation to develop / assess their potential. For example: The paradigm of giving has shifted from a theology of duty to response and how can we address that as congregations/ synod.



note: full reports of Racial and Gender Justice task force are in packet

gRace: Restorative Justice:

“Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Restorative Justice is a way of understanding crime (how does this translate to other “crimes” that we commit of racism, sexism, immigration, hunger and more) in terms of the people and relationships that were harmed, rather than the law that was broken. It is rooted in values of human dignity, right-relationship, healing, accountability, and encounter.

Synod Assembly Report
DEM/ Associate with the Bishop

The question I ask congregations and leaders is: Can we as a synod make God's love and justice real by loving our neighbors, children, and all of creation through our collective work, such as seeking racial, economic, environmental, and LGBTQIA+ justice?

The roots of RESTORATIVE Justice reach deep into human history and can be traced to indigenous cultures throughout the world. These cultures understood that harm ripples out to affect relationships throughout the community, and that thoughtful community dialogue is needed to restore trust, mutual respect, and balance.

Restorative Justice includes:

- Racial Justice
- Gender Justice
- Climate Initiative/ Justice
- w/ the LGBTQIA+ community
- Religious trauma
- Sexual abuse
- Those with disabilities of all kind
- Year of Jubilee

Dreams for our conferences AROUND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE:

- To be an Open and Affirming synod;
- To oppose all forms of violence, misgendering, hate speech to our LGBTQIA+ siblings and persons;
- To be an Accessible to All synod; (i.e. from ASL, Counseling to Educational opportunities)
- To be an Immigrant welcoming synod;
- To advance immigrant justice and human rights for all people;
- To work for Climate Justice and the restoration of God's creation on which all life depends;
- To advocate for economic and restorative justice;
- To be a multicultural/ multi-racial church working to eradicate racism in all of its forms, both within the church and in the structures of our society and world;
- To oppose all forms of misogyny, sexism and violence against women, especially women of color.

Mobility Specialist, Rachel Sosebee

*“And I will give you shepherds after my own heart, who will feed you with knowledge and understanding.”
(Jeremiah 3:15)*

This report reflects April 1, 2022-April, 1, 2023 mobility trends for Upstate New York Synod.

(I started as the mobility specialist, April 1, 2022.)

In April, 2022 there were 8 congregations seeking pastors (5 Full time, 3 part time). By the end of 2022- 1 paused their process, 3 had called pastors, and 4 were still seeking pastors. So far in 2023, 9 congregations are seeking pastors (4 Full time, 5 Part time). 3 are paused, 2 have held call votes, and 4 are interviewing or waiting for candidates. At least 3 more congregations are in the process of preparing their ministry site profiles.

After I got my feet under me in understanding the call process, I also worked with Julie Grindle and Bishop Miller to edit and update 2 documents: Sample Questions (for the call process) and “Welcome to the Call Process”. I also worked with the compensation taskforce to edit and update the [2023 Minimum Compensation](#) document (available on the synod website). In March, 2023, a slide show overview of “Welcome to the Call Process” to our available resources. It will be used as a conversation guide while meeting with call committees and councils to introduce them to the call process. If you are curious about any of these documents, please reach out.

I have only been in this position a year, but wanted to share a few trends I am seeing.

- Location, location, location! Most candidates are seeking a specific synod or even a specific area for their call. It is few and far between rostered leaders completely open and available to anywhere and anything. This has been a growing trend since I was in seminary 20 years ago, but since COVID more and more are looking to making moves based on location. If you are seeking a rostered leader think about why you love where you live and talk it up in your ministry site profile! Think narrative over data.
- According to the ELCA mobility database, there are more congregations seeking than pastors. Our process is ideal for this trend. We value and seek to honor individuals, and so have crafted a relational and adaptable process (appreciated by many pastors coming into our synod.) The process is built for mutually discernment. It is not only a congregation deciding on a candidate, it is also the potential leader deciding on the congregation. Both are discerning, and our relational, highly communicative and connective process encourages that discerning, together.
- Within our synod there are a growing number of congregations unable to fund full time pastors. This is a challenge but also an opportunity to seek collaboration, create new partnerships within the synod and/or with our full communion partner neighbors. It is an opportunity and challenge for congregations to find their place in the ministry of the church as more part time calls are created. Pruning is hardly ever fun or easy, but the growth and fulfillment it produces is beautiful and life giving. The GRACE mindset (Generous Love, Restorative Justice, Adaptive Leadership, Collaboration, Experimentation) positions our congregations, rostered leaders, and synod staff to respond faithfully to the call of ministry for such a time as this. It is an exciting time to be church together!

Rachel Sosebee

Mobility Specialist

Upstate New York Synod

mobility@upstatenysynod.org

614-595-1139

Anniversaries

2023 Congregation Anniversaries

CONGREGATION

CONFERENCE

FOUNDED

In 2023, we celebrate with one congregation in our Synod observing their 200th anniversary:

Immanuel, Clay

Central Crossroads

1823

In 2023, we celebrate with one congregation in our Synod observing their 150th anniversary:

St. John, Rochester

Genesee Finger Lakes

1873

In 2023, we celebrate with one congregation in our Synod observing their 100th anniversary:

St. Paul's, Ellicottville

Southwestern

1923

In 2023, we celebrate with one congregation in our Synod observing their 25^h anniversary:

Zion St. John's, Cobleskill

Foothills

1998

2023 Ordination/Commissioning Anniversaries

We wish to honor and recognize these rostered people who have reached significant anniversaries in their ministry in the name of Christ.

Rostered Leader	Conference	Date
One rostered leader is observing the fifth (5 th) anniversary of their ordination/commissioning (2018):		
The Rev. Lori B. Nickoloff	Genesee Finger Lakes	December 1

Three rostered leaders are observing the fifteenth (15 th) anniversary of their ordination/commissioning (2008):		
The Rev. Naomi Sorrwar-Randall	Central Crossroads	January 5
The Rev. Jordan E. Miller Stubbendick	Niagara Frontier	July 26
The Rev. Adam J. Miller Stubbendick	Niagara Frontier	August 8

Two rostered leader id observing the twentieth (20 th) anniversary of their ordination/commissioning (2003):		
The Rev. Amy Walter Peterson	Genesee Finger Lakes	August 24
Deacon Nancy A. Wagner	Central Crossroads	September 27

Five rostered leaders are observing the twenty-fifth (25 th) anniversary of their ordination/commissioning (1998):		
The Rev. Gail V. Riina	Central Crossroads	June 6
The Rev. Jeffrey D. Silvernail	Hudson Mohawk	June 6
The Rev. Bishop Lee M. Miller II	Niagara Frontier	June 20
The Rev. Deron J. Milleville	Hudson Mohawk	June 26
The Rev. Aileen A. Robbins	Genesee Finger Lakes	October 24

Three rostered leaders are observing the thirtieth (30 th) anniversary of their ordination/commissioning (1993):		
The Rev. Alan W. Anderson	Southwestern	November 7
The Rev. Jo Page	Hudson Mohawk	September 29
The Rev. Dawn E. Rodgers	Central Crossroads	October 30

Four rostered leaders are observing the thirty-fifth (35 th) anniversary of their ordination/commissioning (1988):		
The Rev. Allan J. Ferguson	Central Crossroads	June 12
The Rev. Daniel M. May	Hudson Mohawk	June 18
The Rev. Craig B. Swanson	Genesee Finger Lakes	June 19
The Rev. Mark E. Swanson	Southwestern	July 31

Five rostered leaders are observing the fortieth (40th) anniversary of their ordination/commissioning (1983):

The Rev. Peter S. Klotz	Hudson Mohawk	June 12
The Rev. F. Charles Schwartz Jr.	Hudson Mohawk	June 19
The Rev. Richard K. Klafehn	Central Crossroads	June 26
The Rev. Jerilyn A. Brown	Niagara Frontier	July 17
The Rev. Kenneth G. Simurro Jr.	Foot Hills	October 30

Nine rostered leaders are observing the forty-fifth (45th) anniversary of their ordination/commissioning (1978):

The Rev. Paul D. Rees-Rohrbacher	Hudson Mohawk	February 5
The Rev. Jack W. Bailey	Genesee Finger Lakes	June 3
The Rev. Janet L. Fechner	Central Crossroads	June 3
The Rev. Marie C. Jerge	Central Crossroads	June 3
The Rev. James H. Slater III	Hudson Mohawk	June 11
The Rev. Phillip E. Vender	Niagara Frontier	June 18
The Rev. Paul E. Shoop	Genesee Finger Lakes	June 24
The Rev. David W. Gerhardt	Genesee Finger Lakes	August 13
The Rev. David W. Preisinger	Hudson Mohawk	September 24

Eight rostered leaders are observing the fiftieth (50th) anniversary of their ordination/commissioning (1973). It is with great respect that we present:

The Rev. Neil C. Katterman	Niagara Frontier	January 7
The Rev. James L. Dugan	Genesee Finger Lakes	June 9
The Rev. James A. Hulihan	Hudson Mohawk	June 10
The Rev. Rick L. Bair	Southern Tier	June 22
The Rev. David J. Roppel	Central Crossroads	June 23
The Rev. Michael H. Lubas	Genesee Finger Lakes	June 30
The Rev. Marsha L. B. Irmer	Niagara Fronter	July 7
The Rev. Hans J. R. Irmer	Genesee Finger Lake	July 29

Three rostered leaders are observing the Sixty-fifth (65th) anniversary of their ordination/commissioning (1958) It is with great respect that we present:

The Rev. Ferdinand K. W. Haase	Genesee Finger Lakes	March 30
The Rev. Jack T. Printzenhoff	Niagara Frontier	June 3
The Rev. John A. Swanson	Niagara Frontier	June 22

Ministry Changes

Rostered Minister Changes Report

April 16, 2022 – April 15, 2023

The Rev. Tim Anas accepted a **CALL** to Messiah, Lewiston, effective September 11, 2022.

The Rev. Adam Arends accepted a **CALL** to St. Timothy, Grand Island, effective Feb. 1, 2023.

The Rev. Roger Behrens went **On Leave From Call**, effective November 21, 2022.

The Rev. Hannah Benedict went **On Leave From Call**, effective July 17, 2022.

The Rev. Jeffrey Bohan received and accepted a **CALL** as Pastor to Our Saviour, Endwell, effective May 18, 2022.

The Rev. Laurie Carson went **On Leave From Call**, effective Feb. 13, 2023.

The Rev. Lowell Chilton received and accepted a 2-yr **TERM CALL** from First Lutheran, Albany, effective January 1, 2023.

The Rev. Chuck Copps received and accepted a **CALL** to St. Mark's, Baldwinsville, effective Feb. 12, 2023.

The Rev. Laura Daly went **On Leave From Call**, effective June 1, 2023.

The Rev. Tara Eastman received and accepted an **ECUMENICAL CONTRACT** to First Presbyterian, Jamestown, effective January 15, 2023.

The Rev. Richard Eddy **RETIRED**, effective January 1, 2023.

The Rev. Rebecca Ehrlich received and accepted a **SPECIAL CALL** to University of Albany Campus Ministry, effective February 1, 2023.

The Rev. Devie Ellis **RETIRED**, effective June 1, 2022.

The Rev. Joshua Evans received and accepted a **CALL** to St. John's, Albany, effective April 1, 2023.

The Rev. Tonya Eza received and accepted a **CALL** to Immanuel, Clay, effective March 1, 2023.

The Rev. Susan Feurzeig went **On Leave From Call**, effective January 1, 2023.

The Rev. Meghan James received and accepted a **CALL** to St. Martin, Tonawanda, effective January 15, 2023.

The Re. Jackie Jefferson went **On Leave From Call**, effective March 13, 2023.

The Rev Debbie Johnson **RETIRED**, effective June 1, 2022.

The Rev. Lori Kochanski went **On Leave From Call**, effective Feb. 15, 2023.

The Rev. Jessica Lambert **TRANSFERRED** into the Upstate NY Synod, effective Feb. 1, 2023.

Deacon Lee Lindemann went **On Leave From Call**, effective March 1, 2023.

The Rev. Sara Litzner went **On Leave From Call**, effective November 1, 2022.

The Rev. Dan May received and accepted a Synod Council call as **INTENTIONAL INTERIM**, to Bethany, Elmira, effective, May 1, 2023.

The Rev. Brenda Maynor went **On Leave From Call**, effective July 17, 2022.

The Rev. Jane Mountain **TRANSFERRED** into the Upstate NY Synod, effective Feb. 15, 2023.

The Rev. Jo Page went **On Leave From Call**, effective July 17, 2022.

The Rev. Jeff Silvernail accepted a CALL as **INTENTIONAL INTERIM PASTOR** to Gilead Lutheran Church, effective June 1, 2022. This call was extended through the end of 2023.

The Rev. Ken Simurro accepted an **ECUMENICAL CONTRACT** with First Presbyterian, Bainbridge, effective June 1, 2022.

The Rev. Naomi Sorrwar-Randall accepted an **ECUMENICAL CONTRACT** with St. David's Episcopal Church, Barneveld, beginning May 1, 2022.

The Rev. Richard Stewart **TRANSFERRED** to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The Rev. Darcy Tillman received and accepted a **CALL** to Lord of Life, Depew, effective Feb. 19, 2023.

The Rev. Deborah Turley **RETIRED**, effective January 31, 2023.

The Rev. Laura Wade accepted a contract as **PASTOR** to St. Luke's, Sidney, effective July 1, 2022.

Deacon Nancy Wagner went **On Leave From Call**, effective May 1, 2022.

The Rev. Terry White **RETIRED**, effective October 1, 2022.

Dean's Report on the Roster of Ministers

The Deans have reviewed the Roster of Ordained Ministers and certified this Roster to the Synod Council. These people are listed annually in the Synod Directory, and all calls to non-congregational ministries have been acted on by the Synod Council.

Rostered Leaders On Leave From Call as of April 15, 2023

The Rev. Hannah Benedict

The Rev. Laurie Carson

The Rev. Laura Daly

The Rev. Susan Feurzeig

The Rev. Jackie Jefferson

The Rev. Lori Kochanski

The Rev. Jess Lambert

Deacon Lee Lindemann

The Rev. Sara Litzner

The Rev. Brenda Maynor

The Rev. Jo Page

Deacon Nancy Wagner

Rostered Leaders on Disability as of April 15, 2023

The Rev. Judith Chapman

Congregation Changes Report

July 2021-April 2023

Mergers

Amherst, Williamsville (merged with St. Paul's, Eggertsville) – Niagara Frontier

Reformation, Rochester (merged with Our Savior, Chili) – Genesee Finger Lakes

Legacy

***Crossroads, Amherst** – Niagara Frontier

***Emanuel/St. John's, Hudson** – Hudson Mohawk

***Gloria Dei, Lakewood** – Southern Tier

North Park, Buffalo – Niagara Frontier

Resurrection, Buffalo – Niagara Frontier

***St. Paul's, Oak Hill** – Hudson Mohawk

St. Paul's, Niagara Falls – Niagara Frontier

St. Paul's, Spencer – Southern Tier

Zion, Cobleskill – Foothills

*denotes that the legal dissolution process is now complete.

Thanks be to God for these congregations, for all the Saints who have shared God's glory through them,
And for the ways they continue to grow the church through their Legacies!

Bless the Lord, O my soul, O my soul;

Worship God's holy name.

Sing like never before, O my soul;

I'll worship your holy name.

The sun comes up, it's a new day dawning;

It's time to sing your song again.

Whatever may pass, and whatever lies before me,

Let me be singing when the evening comes.

Bless the Lord, O my soul!

(ACS #1097)

In Memoriam

In sure and certain hope in the Resurrection

The Upstate New York Synod
shares the news of the death of retired pastor
The Rev. Stephen Hluchy



*"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me
even though they die, will live" (John 11:25).*

Pastor Stephen Hluchy, a forty-five year resident of Skaneateles, NY, died Sunday, May 29, 2022 surrounded by his daughters after a long struggle with cancer.

Pr. Hluchy lived in the St. John's community in Rochester, NY for the past nine years. He was born in 1928 in Jamesburg, New Jersey, the son of the late John and Anna (Viskup) Hluchy. He spent his childhood years in New York City and Robbinsville, NJ. After graduating Allentown High School, he attended Wagner College in New York City where he graduated with a B.A. in history in 1954. He married his wife Olga Nahlik in 1954 at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church In New York City. He was ordained there five years later in 1959 upon his graduation from Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary.

For his first call, he served a bilingual Slovak/English ministry to three sister parishes in Pennsylvania for nearly a decade: Saint Matthews Lutheran Church in Mount Carmel, Holy Emmanuel Slovak Lutheran Church in Mahanoy City, and St. John's Lutheran Church in Saint Clair, sometimes officiating six services each week. He answered a call to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Skaneateles, New York where he served for the next twenty-five years until his retirement in 1992. During his years in Skaneateles, he served as fire department chaplain and as a member of the Clergy Association of Skaneateles and the Narcotics Council. He was also on the committee for the Caring Coalition which became the Hospice of Central New York. After retirement, he was a visiting minister for St. Stephens Lutheran Church in Syracuse, NY where he cared for the elderly, sick and homebound. He was honored with the title of Pastor Emeritus at Holy Trinity in 1995. Steve was beloved by his parishioners and known by his colleagues as a pastor of integrity

and moral character and for his caring ministry. He recently celebrated his sixty-third anniversary of ordination.

Pastor Hluchy was predeceased by his wife, Olga (Nahlik) of 62 years; his parents; his brother, John Hluchy; sister, Anna; and brother-in-law, John Pavlovich. He is survived by his sister, Elizabeth Agati; his three daughters, Carol Carson (Bill), Michele Hluchy (Larry Deis) and Stefanie Hluchy (Francisco Delgado); grandsons, William Carson (Kaitlin) and Alexander Carson (Catharine); and great-granddaughter, Mae.

Read the full obituary [here](#).

A Memorial Service will be held at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Skaneateles, New York this summer.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to:

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church
37 W. Genesee St.
Skaneateles, NY 13152.

In sure and certain hope in the Resurrection

The Upstate New York Synod
shares the news of the death of retired pastor
The Rev. Jeri Dexheimer



January 3, 1948 –June 19, 2022

Jeri was born in Kansas but spent most of her early adult years in southern California. She graduated from Helix High School in San Diego. After graduation, she worked as a hair dresser for several years and performed in community theater at the Old Globe Theater in San Diego.

As an adult convert, she was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church and began to study everything she could about her new found faith. Her thirst for knowledge led her to enroll at the University of San Diego where she received her degree with an emphasis on religious studies and psychology.

In 1990, she received her first Masters Degree in New Testament studies from the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. While there, she happened to attend a Lutheran Church. The Lutheran understanding of God's unconditional grace resonated deeply with her. She soon enrolled at the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, completed her internship at United Lutheran Church in Eugene, OR and was ordained on June 21, 1996.

Jeri served several congregations, including in Washington and Otis KS. In 2002, she became the first ELCA Lutheran minister to be licensed by the Anglican Church in New Zealand. There she served as pastor in New Plymouth and Auckland. Following her stay in New Zealand, she moved back to Herington, KS and later served as an interim pastor in Berne and Redwood, NY. Upon her retirement, she moved back to Oregon and lived in Corvallis for several years.

Jeri's ministry was inspired by the Gospel of Luke. She had a deep commitment to fostering inclusivity, advocating for all who needed healing, and sharing the Gospel message with others. She insisted on giving a voice to those who couldn't speak for themselves – including all of God's creatures. She loved her pets, especially her dogs Suzie, Cliffie, and Mikey, and her kitty Black Jack.

Jeri leaves behind her beloved dog Mikey and several close friends who miss her witty humor, her deep theological discussions and her caring, kind and giving nature.

In sure and certain hope in the Resurrection

The Upstate New York Synod
shares the news of the death of retired pastor
The Rev. Norman J. Heid



"I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me even though they die, will live" (John 11:25).

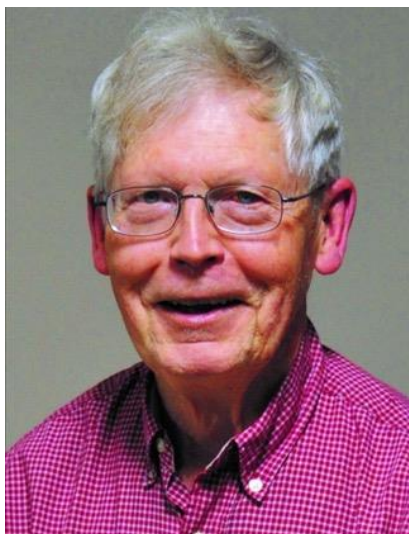
Born in 1935, the Reverend Norman J. Heid went to be with his Lord and Savior on July 12, 2022. He was a native of Liverpool, NY and a graduate of Hartwick College in Oneonta and the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia. Pastor Heid served parishes in Orangeburg, Williamsville and Herkimer, NY. He retired from the Lutheran Home, Clinton, after 24 years of service.

He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Susan; son, John (Martha) Heid, of Georgia; four grandchildren; two nieces; and a nephew.

Private services were held for the family. Arrangements by Owens-Pavlot & Rogers Funeral Service. Please consider donations, in Pastor Heid's memory, to a service organization of your choice which helps people in need.

In sure and certain hope in the Resurrection

The Upstate New York Synod
shares the news of the death of
The Rev. Alan W. Anderson



The Rev. Alan W. Anderson, 77, of Jamestown, died Saturday March 25, 2023, in Lutheran Home and Rehabilitation Center due to complications from Parkinson's Disease. A native of Slayton, MN, he was born November 13, 1945, a son of the late Clifford and Ethel Christensen Anderson.

He was a 1967 graduate of University of Minnesota, served two years in the Peace Corps in Malawi and later went on to graduate from Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, OH. He served in the National Guard from 1970-72. Prior to his ministry he was employed as a psychologist in Minnesota at Faribault State Hospital and in Pennsylvania as MIS director for the Cameron, Elk, McKean and Potters Counties Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Drug and Alcohol Programs.

Pr. Anderson was Ordained November 7, 1993 and served Zion Lutheran Church, Frewsburg, St. Paul Lutheran Church, Eggertsville, NY and Bethel Lutheran Church, Jamestown until his retirement in 2018.

He was a member of the Frewsburg Lions Club and served on the boards of directors of the Lutheran Social Services, G.A. Home, and the Lutheran House at Chautauqua Institution. Always proud of his Swedish Heritage, Alan was a longtime member of Thule Lodge and its Folk Dancers. He thoroughly enjoyed the dancers' 2018 trip to Sweden. He will be remembered as an avid reader, collector, cook, and Scandinavian folk dancer as well as his pride and love in his family, and love for Christ' church.

Surviving is his wife Suellen Carlson, whom he married May 28, 1983; two children Luke Anderson of Philadelphia and Jenna (Mark) Buchner of Grand Rapids, MI; a sister Luine (John) Runquist of New Brighton, MN; sister in law Janelle (Randy) LaFond of Murrells Inlet, SC; nieces and nephews Jay (Patricia) Runquist, Eric (Liz) Runquist, Lindsay Elliott and Eric (Melissa Knopp) Laubenthal and great niece and nephews Luna, Owen and Crosby Runquist. He was preceded in death by a brother Neil Anderson.

A memorial service will be held at 11 am April 14, 2023, in First Lutheran Church, Jamestown. Friends will be received for one hour prior to the service in the church. Clergy are invited to vest. The color of the day is white.

Memorials may be made to Lutheran Foundation, 715 Falconer Street, Jamestown, NY 14701, Parkinson's Foundation, 200 SE 1st Street, Suite 800, Miami, FL 33131, or Chautauqua County Humane Society, 2825 Strunk Road, Jamestown, NY 14701. You may leave words of condolence at www.lindfunerahome.com.

In sure and certain hope in the Resurrection

The Upstate New York Synod shares the news of the death of The Rev. Allen K. Griep



Rev. Allen K. Griep of Town of Tonawanda, NY died March 29, 2023. Beloved husband of the late Shirley (Pabst) Griep. Dear father of Dr. Anne Griep (Dr. Paul Lambert), Margaret (Kenneth) Gibb, Kristin (Timothy) Contangelo and Stephaine (William) Tate. Loving grandfather of Katherine, Erika, Alexia, Jason, Wesley, Alison, Marissa, Patrick, Leonetta and the late Elizabeth. Brother of Barbara (Edger) Appleton and the late Ronald Griep.

Allen was born September 19, 1930 in Syracuse, New York to William M. and Lucy Eagle Griep. He had an active life as a youth in the Boy Scouts, attaining the rank of Eagle Scout. He also was active in his church, where he met the love of his life, Shirley Pabst. Both attended Syracuse University, graduating in 1952. After graduation, Allen entered the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia from which he graduated in 1955. Allen and Shirley married in 1953.

Allen took up his first parish call in Fayetteville, NY, where he was charged with forming a new parish, that became known as Good Shepherd Lutheran Church. In 1960 the family (now Allen, Shirley, Anne and Margaret) moved to Kenmore, New York where Allen became the pastor at St. Mark's Lutheran Church. In 1967 the family (now Allen, Shirley, Anne, Margaret, Kristin and Stephanie) moved to Brooklyn, New York, where Allen became the pastor of St. Jacobi Lutheran Church. While in New York, Allen earned a degree of Master of Sacred Theology from New York Theological Seminary and was Chaplain of the Lutheran Medical Center in Brooklyn. He was a certified Diplomate of the American Association of Pastoral Counselors and the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy. He was also licensed by the NYS Education Department as a mental health counselor.

In 1972, after completing these programs, he was recruited to serve as the Executive Director of the Samaritan Pastoral Counseling Center in Buffalo, New York. Throughout the rest of his life, he actively filled in at churches in the area for pastors on vacation, or for vacancies. After retiring from the SPCC in 1995, he served with the chaplain program at Niagara Lutheran Health System. He served as Chairman of the Board of Directors for Lutheran Charities in WNY. In the last years of his life, he was heavily involved with the mission of a new church in North Tonawanda, The Church Of The Apostles, under the leadership of Rev. Troy Mulvaine.

Pastor Allen, for many years, enjoyed riding his horse, Rev-Elation. Throughout his life, Allen was dedicated to the mission of the Church and its people and devoted to his family, wife Shirley, daughters, sons-in-law and grandchildren. We remember the many family vacations, trekking out for camping trips across the country, the family dinners at holiday times, the summer barbeques on his patio, and all the times both happy and sorrowful in which he supported us.

Friends may call Tuesday, April 4th 4-8 pm at the LESTER H. WEDEKINDT, INC., FUNERAL HOME 3290 Delaware Ave. Relatives and friends are invited to attend Funeral Services on Thursday, April 6th at 10 am. At Church of the Apostles Lutheran 75 17th Street N. Tonawanda, NY. Please share online condolences at www.lesterwedekindtfuneralhome.com

ELCA Reports

Candidacy and Leadership, Regions 7 and 8

Gracious God, we thank you for the new life you give us through holy baptism. Especially, we ask you to bless those gathered in Synod Assembly and all who are discerning a call to rostered ministry. Continue to strengthen them with the Holy Spirit, and increase in them your gifts of grace: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (adapted from Anniversary of a Baptism, ELW Pastoral Care, p.131)

Grace to you and peace as you gather in assembly. Thank you for answering the call to serve the church by attending to the work we do together. Thank you also for taking time to read this report about our shared ministry of Candidacy and First Call in Regions 7 and 8.

What is Candidacy? It is the process of formation and discernment that prepares someone considering a call to be a deacon or pastor in the ELCA. It is the avenue by which a candidate is evaluated for public service in the church in partnership with home congregations, seminaries, churchwide, and synods. Your Synod Candidacy Committee works confidentially to accompany and prepare potential candidates for ordained ministry through prayerful discernment, intentional conversation, and thoughtful interviewing. They act to make decisions regarding a person's readiness for ordained ministry.

What is First Call? Near the end of candidacy, one may be approved for ordination. As a candidate approaches approval, a potential pastor or deacon enters a process where bishops meet by region to discern and determine in which synod God might be calling that candidate to serve.

What is my role? In my call as a deployed staff person of the ELCA, I listen to people share their sense of how God might be calling them to serve. I assist committees in their prayerful deliberation of candidates and provide education about candidacy and the first call process. In September 2023, candidacy committee members will have the opportunity to participate in a national online candidacy summit.

You are a part of this ministry. When you pray for people who are considering a call to ordained ministry; when you pray for your bishop, synod staff, and other leaders; when you ask a young person or a retiree or your lay Bible study leader if they have ever considered being a pastor or a deacon, you are a part of candidacy ministry.

How can you learn more about Candidacy?

To learn more about the current candidacy process, go to [ELCA.org/resources/candidacy](https://www.elca.org/resources/candidacy) There are many materials for those considering becoming a pastor or deacon. "Called to Lead" is a guide for considering the many ways a person's baptismal call might be lived out in the world.

We have also recently launched a new online discernment tool at www.journi.faith for anyone who is interested in exploring how their gifts for ministry can be used in the church and beyond.

In March 2022, a Candidacy Leadership Development Working Group convened for the purpose of formally reviewing the entire candidacy process. You can learn more about the progress of the Working Group at [ELCA.org/our-work/leadership/candidacy-leadership-development](https://www.elca.org/our-work/leadership/candidacy-leadership-development)

Thank you for your synod's participation in this shared ministry and for the privilege to serve among you.

In Christ,

The Rev. A. Rebecca Resch, Candidacy and Leadership Manager, Regions 7 & 8

becky.resch@elca.org

Mission Investment Fund



Mission Investment Fund

The Mission Investment Fund: Your financial partner

The Mission Investment Fund, a financial services ministry of the ELCA, provides a strong, stable, faith-based way for individuals, congregations and ministries to achieve their financial goals. MIF offers a range of investments for individuals, congregations and ministries. We put those investments to work to fund building and renovation loans for congregations and partner ministries, including outdoor camps, senior housing and social service agencies.



The result? Impact investments, with a transformative impact on our communities: Expanded worship spaces ... new space for education and youth ministry ... much-needed day care centers for working families ... industrial-grade kitchens and fellowship halls for community meals.

Why is MIF the right choice?

- **MIF has demonstrated expertise** in church and ministry financing. With longstanding experience in congregation and ministry building projects, we're unique among lending institutions.
- **We consistently offer competitive rates and terms.**
- **We offer a full suite of financial services.** MIF offers congregations, ministries and individuals a host of investment options. We work in deep partnership with the ELCA Federal Credit Union to offer a wide range of financial products and services.
- **The faithful stewardship of Lutheran congregations and their members funds our loans.** The money invested in MIF finances hundreds of capital projects across the church.

MIF has a longstanding tradition of strength and stability. At year-end 2022, MIF had 812 loans outstanding, totaling \$582.7 million. Investment obligations totaled \$559.4 million. With total assets of \$776.3 million and net assets of \$202.9 million at year-end 2022, MIF maintains a capital ratio of 26.14 percent—positioning MIF in the top tier of well-capitalized church extension funds.

Our steadfast support continues for the members, congregations and ministries of the ELCA and the many ways you minister to a world in need. We are honored to walk alongside you as a trusted partner.

MIF at work in the Upstate New York Synod (as of December 31, 2022):

- 7 Mission Investment Fund loans, with a balance of \$1,261,792
- \$3,885,876 in Mission Investment Fund investment obligations

For more information about MIF capabilities, please visit our website, mif.elca.org or contact your Regional Manager Richard Eatman, Jr: 813-245-6195 richard.eatman@elca.org

Mission Investment Fund | 8765 West Higgins Road | Chicago, Illinois 60631 | Tel: 877-886-3522 | Web: mif.elca.org

ELCA Federal Credit Union



***Providing a full complement of financial services
to ELCA members, congregations and ministries***



The ELCA Federal Credit Union, founded in 2016, provides a full suite of financial products and services to members, congregations and ministries of the ELCA. **We are the first of the ELCA's financial ministries to offer loans to individuals.**

The Credit Union offers a rich variety of products—from savings and checking accounts and CDs ... to loans, lines of credit and credit cards. And now, we provide home mortgage loans for new homes or remodeling, along with home equity lines of credit.

We serve ministries with deposit accounts, a flexible credit card program, auto loans and unsecured ministry loans up to \$100,000 for small projects such as building repair and purchases. Our new CU@Work program presents the opportunity for ministry organizations to offer our Credit Union products and services to their employees.

In 2022, we ushered in the fourth cohort of participants in the ELCA's Resourceful Servants program, designed to improve financial wellness and assist rostered leaders in building emergency savings funds. In this matching program, ELCA rostered leaders make ongoing deposits to their Credit Union emergency savings accounts, and our partner MIF matches those funds up to an established amount. Together, we already have served **657 rostered ministers** who, collectively, have made emergency savings deposits of more than \$1 million.

Our strong online presence allows members to access their funds anytime, anywhere—as consumers expect today.

Why choose the ELCA Federal Credit Union?

- **The ELCA Federal Credit Union supports the ELCA's mission of good stewardship.** We provide full services to all ELCA members, congregations and related ministries.
- **Our mission is to offer competitively priced products and services.** We can often offer better rates and lower fees than traditional banks. We have demonstrated success in providing savings to our borrowers.
- **With the church as our sponsor, we operate in ways that are consistent with the church's values.**

Membership is open to every ELCA member, synod, congregation and ministry—and their employees.

For more information about the products and services of the ELCA Federal Credit Union, please visit our website, elcafcu.org or call us at toll free at 877-715-1111.

Conference Reports & Updates

Central Crossroads Report

Thanking God for the people I work with helps me see the world in perspective. My colleagues in Christ's ministry, lay and rostered, make the Central Crossroads Conference work. Our conference cabinet gives me advice I need. Bishop Miller, Pr. Imani Olear, Julie Grindle, and Rachel Sosebee have helped me grow into the roles a dean fills. My predecessor, Pr. Gail Wolling, prepared me to take on the dean's office and offered advice based on her experience at critical times. Our Synod Authorized Ministers (Sue Nalle, Tom Henry, Greg May, and David Grindle) and retired rostered ministers routinely fill pulpits and preside at Christ's table at churches in transition and when pastors need time to be children of God rather than leaders of congregations. Deacon Patsy Glista, conference secretary, is my reminder for meetings, agendas and cabinet goals and tasks. Pr. Jeff Kane is my "go to guy" for advice on technology and communication in the conference. I am not stretching the truth when I say I could not fulfill the duties of dean without them! I thank God for them constantly.

Transitions

My first public duty as dean began at the celebration of the life and ministry of Pr. Steve Hluchy at Holy Trinity Church in June. Pr. Paula Roulette witnessed to Christ and Pr. Hluchy's ministry graciously in her homily.

I began transition tasks by conducting my first exit interview with Pr. Hannah Benedict, who resigned her call from St. Mark's Church in Baldwinsville to further her education. God is gracious and had a person ready to lead in the person of Chuck Copps, who was completing his vicar year at St. Mark's under the guidance of Pr. John Ferrie.

Immanuel Church (Clay) completed the search for their next pastor in December (and called Pr. Tonya Eza in January 2023). I thank God and their council for the opportunity to walk with them in this process. It is a memorable way to prepare for the celebration of the congregation's 200-year history as a Lutheran presence in Central New York.

Northern Area

St. Paul's Church in Redwood had acquired the local Odd Fellows hall and updated the kitchen in 2022 to better accommodate fellowship meals. This small parish cares for four buildings: the church, a parsonage, Fellowship Hall (home to the nursery school and food pantry) and the Odd Fellows hall (to host parish and community activities). Orleans Evangelical Church continues to be part of its community as a small/rural church in a world that places many obstacles for small/rural churches.

Pr. Paul Luisi set a record at Concordia Church in Watertown as the longest term for a pastor in a first call—31 years. This is a record for Upstate NY Synod; rumors say possibly a record for the entire ELCA.

Grace Church in Oswego continues to be served by Pr. Roy Terry as stated supply. The church partners with Oswego YMCA in hosting a skate park in their building and providing a safe environment for kids after-school.

Pr. Diane Wheatley and Prince of Peace Church in Fulton lead a community effort in feeding hungry children. They have seen a big increase in community financial support, packers from other churches and the community, and energy around helping hungry children as they feed 240 children every weekend of the school year. They also are growing their use of media to reach out to the world in Christ's name.

The East End

I met with leaders from United Lutheran Presbyterian Parish in Dolgeville early in my term and the Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Utica, Larry Beasley, who preaches frequently for the ULPP community. This church has a mission as a healing church. The members are determined to continue their ministry to the community through

its preschool program. Funds from Presbyterian Disaster Assistance working through ULPP helped the Dolgeville area recover from recent floods of West Canada Creek.

Trinity Church (Herkimer) and Zion Church (New Hartford) each continue in transition and work together with Bible study and other groups. Informal activity is one way for churches to know one another and see the opportunities God offers for sharing ministry in their communities.

Trinity Church, which has been led by laity for five years, partners with other churches in the community to provide an ecumenical warming center housed in the United Methodist church. They provide more than 60 homemade meals a month through the Salvation Army and a home meals program.

Pr. Bill Preuss, Zion Church's Transition Pastor, and the Council worked with Pr. Lori Kochanski in the ABIDE process to discern future directions for the congregation. Conversations show they sense God offers interesting new directions for their future.

Our Saviour Church reported a memorable experience on Easter 2022: the church lost heat in the sanctuary and moved Easter worship to the gym. The Saturday before Easter members decorated the gym with sunflowers in honor of Ukraine. (Even the backboards were decorated!) Our Saviour includes children in both Christian Education and worship by preparing packets of activities and suggestions for parents on interaction with children for teaching the stories of the church year, for prayer, for serving ministry.

Recovery groups that met at Our Saviour at least ten times each week (before Covid) returned. A greater struggle for Our Saviour was dealing with homeless folks who took up residence on the portico. The church was open to them sleeping there until too many came and church members found syringes on the lawn, blood on the sidewalk, leftover trash from dumpster diving at the neighborhood grocery store and all kinds of hoarding items.

Metro-Syracuse Area

Holy Trinity Church in Skaneateles had many joys in 2022. The church's very active preschool had to create a "wait list" for the first time in more than ten years, the first time since Pr. Paula Roulette accepted call. The church also developed a partnership with Sts. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Catholic Church in Auburn to help support 33 refugees from Ukraine resettle in the area. Holy Trinity's members provided winter clothing and offered to provide spring clothing for them as well.

King of Kings Church in Liverpool opens its doors to community groups including painting, quilting, Blue Birds, Scouts, AA and WW. They are active supporters of Interfaith Works and local feeding ministries, and have also begun the process for formal status as a Reconciling in Christ congregation.

Immanuel Church in Clay maintained a food pantry and outreach to seniors in the community while preparing for its bicentennial year in 2023. Intentional Interim Pastor Mark Swanson and Transition Pastor Paul Dreher-Wiburg guided the congregation's leaders during the call process and into making first steps to responding to the announced development of a microchip factory in the immediate neighborhood.

Faith Church in Cicero experienced slow but steady growth in worship attendance and outreach in the community through its food pantry, hosting twelve-step groups, and a relationship with CanTeen, a supervised youth center halfway between the church and Cicero-North Syracuse High School. Like many churches in the conference, electronic outreach through livestreamed worship redefined the geography of the assembly to include parishioners in Maine, Oregon, and Florida.

Luther Memorial Church in North Syracuse began exploring whether they should share a pastor with a neighboring church or ministry. Covid-19 has forced every church to ask how aging congregations and the growing number of Americans who do not seek church membership are changing mainline churches like the ELCA.

Atonement Church in Syracuse, through its Appleseed Outreach, serves meals to the hungry on Wednesdays and maintains a food pantry ministry for its neighborhood while engaging in social justice ministries and ministries for new Americans in the city.

St. Stephen's Church, also in Syracuse, continues its programs that enables Syracuse University students, some affiliated with the Lutheran Campus Ministry, to tutor and work with public school students from the city.

Good Shepherd Church in Fayetteville has a unique relationship with a church that is not a full-communion partner. The congregation shares its church building with a newly-started evangelical congregation. This relationship is worth watching. Some experts say the future for mainline congregations depends on creative use of church property for the good of the larger community.

The South

Grace and Holy Spirit Church in Cortland is our only congregation in the conference south of Onondaga county, and our only ministry that purposely blends two church polities and worship traditions, Episcopal Church and ELCA. Father Peter Williams takes pride in his Saturday evening "café church" that meets in the church's fellowship room. His intent was to reach out to Cortland community members who cannot see themselves sitting in a church pew and singing hymns to an organ.

The Future in Central Crossroads

Our ministerium has discussed the need to plan for the many changes our churches will face as Micron Corporation develops a microchip factory in our community. Published estimates say the factory will employ more than 9,000 workers. We need training for mission and evangelism for the 21st century. The old playbooks and strategies that got us where we are today were never designed for a growing body of people who see little use for a community of faith that gathers one day of the week. We live in a different world from the saints who founded our churches in the 19th and 20th century. We, as Christ's people for this time and place, need to prepare for these changes as we proclaim our crucified and risen Savior.

Submitted by Pr. Allan Ferguson, Dean

Foothills Conference Report

The congregations of Foothills Conference have been involved in a variety of ministries on this territory in 2022. It has been a year of reopening our church buildings, transitions, and becoming reacquainted with what it is like to be together after the worst of COVID.

Trinity, Amsterdam continued its Comfort Zone Ministry and this year, distributed items with its partners at the Food Bank.

Zion-St. John's, Seward was joyful to return to in-house servings of the Strawberry Festival and Harvest Dinner in 2022 for the first time since 2019! They recalled that in 2021 the strawberry shortcake was take-out only, and the pork dinner wasn't served at all. The congregation was gratified to see people fill Fellowship Hall and hear their conversation and laughter this past June and September. It was also a year of continuing ministry with Marchand Manor, a local nursing home. They made personal Valentines, baked pies for Pi Day, sent Easter cards, held a late summer Sunday worship service in the parking lot, and gave individual Christmas presents. Other ministries included filling Christmas boxes for Samaritan's Purse, donations to support Ukrainians, help with a neighbor's medical expenses, and monthly donations to the Sharon Springs Food Pantry.

Bethany, Central Bridge has continued its partnership with Helderberg Lutheran in Berne of the Hudson Mohawk Conference. They have contracted for a 1-year term with Robert Holt SAM to provide pastoral ministry in both locations. The food pantry has had heavy use during the year.

Grace, Johnstown has contracted with Vicar Melissa Bedell as intern in their location. It has been a year of transitions as regularized forms of ministry come online again. Many thanks to Rev. Dr. John Califano of St. Luke's, Amsterdam for assisting as Transition Pastor Leader for a while.

Rev. Paul Messner and the dedicated staff of the Hartwick Seminary Institute of Theology saw their 32nd Summer Institute offer training and continuing education to the laity in the conference and across the state. Courses in Theology, Liturgics and Homiletics, Old and New Testament, Church History, and a variety of electives makes for a varied experience as always.

St. John-St. Mark's, Canajoharie and Trinity, Stone Arabia have continued their work with the Mohawk Valley Lutheran Green Team. Joint work with the Salvation Army in Gloversville, an innovative "Bible and Beer" series of Bible studies at a local bar were led (and imbibed), and working with a congregation council member who is preparing to enter the process of becoming a SAM.

Zion, Cobleskill has ceased regular worship after 229 years of continuous ministry and its buildings and assets are being overseen by a small cadre of conservators.

The congregations of the Otsego County Lutheran Parish (Atonement, Oneonta, St. Matthew's, Laurens, Evangelical, Hartwick Seminary, and St. John's, West Burlington) have soldiered on while staying safe (disinfecting buildings, COVID protocols). Regular worship and maintenance of buildings along with keeping Sunday School alive, food pantries, and visitation as possible has kept the four congregations active in these times.

St. Luke's, Amsterdam celebrated its 130th anniversary as well as the 45th ordination anniversary of its pastor, Rev. Dr. John Califano. Bishop Miller was in attendance as were dignitaries and friends. St. Luke's and Grace, Johnstown have worshipped together this year and Liberty ARC consumers (who clean the church) celebrated with a pizza party in their honor.

St. Paul's, Richmondville has contracted with Steve and Marie Gerhart as their SAMs-in-Residence for a 1-yr. term. The Food Pantry soldiers on as it meets the increasing needs for emergency nutrition in the local area.

In congregational transitions (as noted above), Grace, Johnstown has contracted with Vicar Melissa Bedell as a TEEM candidate; Zion-St. John's, Seward has contracted with the Reverend Wendy Cook as TPL; St. Paul's, Fort Plain has received a 1-year extension by Synod Council of a non-stipendiary call to Rev. Jonathan Litzner

through 9/30/23; Bethany, Central Bridge saw Robert Holt SAM contracted for a 1-year term through 7/31/23 and this congregation continues a yoking arrangement with Helderberg Lutheran Church in Berne; St. Paul's, Richmondville, had contracted with Steve and Marie Gerhart as SAMs for a 1-year term beginning 3/1/22.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Dr. Ken Simurro, Jr.

Dean, Foothills Conference

Genesee/Finger Lakes Conference

Genesee/Finger Lakes Conference

The Genesee/Finger Lakes Conference is comprised of 23 congregations, the South Wedge Mission in Rochester, and the joint Lutheran-Episcopal campus ministry at the Rochester Institute of Technology. The conference is loosely centered in Rochester, but stretches from Kendall in the West, to Lyons in the East, and south to Wellsville near the Pennsylvania border.

In 2022 most congregations relaxed the precautions they put in place at the height of the pandemic. What they found was that they were living in a very different social reality. In most congregations worship attendance is about two-thirds of what it was before the pandemic. Overall involvement and giving has declined similarly.

Kelsey Creamer has served as the conference's youth director for the past several years. In 2022 she tried resuming several pre-pandemic youth activities that were favorites, but without success. She also tried to develop new activities; also without success. At the end of 2022 Kelsey resigned as the youth director in order to have time for other things – like the birth of her first child. (Congratulations Kelsey!) The conference is currently reviewing its entire youth ministry program and hoping to have something in place for the fall of 2023.

A bi-weekly text study met at Atonement in Brighton where rostered leaders gather to look at upcoming lectionary texts. Some congregations in the conference followed the Revised Common Lectionary, while others followed the Narrative Lectionary developed by Luther Seminary.

The conference ministerium met monthly for continuing education, spiritual growth, and fun. In January the ministerium held its annual Pre-Lent Retreat. It was led by the Rev. Dr. Leah Schade, Associate Professor of Preaching and Worship at Lexington Theological Seminary.

Special Calls, Mergers

- Rev. Steven Meyers continues serving Trinity Reformed church in on a year-by-year term-call basis.
- Rev. Eric Thompson, an Episcopal Priest, is continues serving St. Paul's, Dansville as part of a cooperative agreement between that congregation and St. Peter's Episcopal in Dansville.
- Rev. Korey Finstad was called to serve the two-point parish of Bethlehem, Penfield and St. Martin, Webster just as the pandemic was beginning. He was finally formally installed late in 2022.
- Reformation, Rochester formally merged with Our Saviour, Chili. The Rev. Joe Wilck is serving the merged congregations.

Congregations Currently in Transition

- Concordia, Kendall; Rev. Aileen Robbins transitional pastor
- Reformation, Rochester; Rev. Andrew Gookin transitional pastor
- St. Timothy, Genesee; served by Intern Lisa Frauens, supervised by Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson.

Congregations Operating without a Regularly Called Pastor

- St. John's, Lyons; Rev. Jonathan Deibler, pastor of record
- Zion, Cohocton; Rev. Deborah Johnson, pastor of record

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Jonathan Deibler

Hudson Mohawk Conference Report

February 2022-April 23

The Hudson-Mohawk Conference comprises Albany, Columbia, Greene, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady counties, bisected by the Hudson River. Its twenty-five congregations are served by thirty rostered leaders. Several of these are on leave from call and among the twelve retired pastors, about half are active as much-needed supply preachers/presiders in ministry sites that vary from rural and semi-rural to urban and suburban. One congregation is served by a SAM and a seminarian is to begin a vicarate this summer.

We have a monthly Ministerium, providing collegiality and support for rostered leaders, along with the opportunity to worship together and participate in that day's program. We have several active Synodically Authorized Ministers (SAMs), and we offer both teens and young adults opportunities to grow in faith and community through Confirmation and High School Camps, as Synod-wide faith formation opportunities.

In keeping with the sturdy collegial bonds within the Conference, partnering with other congregations is a lively option. The four Albany Lutheran churches participate in weekly Lenten soup suppers and worship services, as well as an Easter vigil. Several Schenectady churches together offer Ashes on Jay (Jay street is a pedestrian area of shops and eateries). Messiah Lutheran, with its newly opened Rotterdam Community Center offers conference-wide, justice-seeking events. The active, interfaith organization, Schenectady Clergy Against Hate, offer public events in which several local Lutheran churches participate, such as the vigil upon the announcing the George Floyd verdict and a rally at City Hall against gun violence. Several of the congregations in Rensselaer County work together with feeding programs and outreach.

Each Tuesday morning, throughout the year, an ecumenical text study meets, currently still on Zoom, to prepare for that Sunday's upcoming sermon writing.

In June 2022 we joyfully celebrated the wedding of the Rev. Dustin and Rachel Longmire and in addition, we mourned the passing of our colleague, the Rev. Dan Hahn's wife, Debbie.

In September we participated (with the Dean as the auctioneer—my maiden voyage as one!) in the annual Cornerstone Campus Ministry fundraising dinner, at which significant funds were raised and a bottle of wine—encased in a hand-made label from a vineyard in “Jerusalem”!—was auctioned off (see above about the auctioneer's first gig) in which a bidding war managed to bring in additional income.

Also in September, I was honored to present the Rev. Joyce Steinkraus Giles award to the Rev. David Preisinger for his years of dedicated service in the Capital Region.

In December we celebrated the opening of the Rotterdam Community Center, a ministry of Messiah, Rotterdam, housed in a former RCA church building. Also in December, we were present in respectable numbers at the State Council of Churches dinner which this year highlighted the work of clergy in Buffalo during the past violent and difficult year.

In February, 2023, rostered clergy met for a pre-lenten retreat at Christ the King center in Washington County and in March several of us gathered for a (much delayed) cocktail/mocktail party at the Dean's home.

In April, Hudson Mohawk and Foothills Conferences clergy and church leaders gathered to renew their vows at the annual Chrism Mass, hosted this year by Messiah, Rotterdam. I am especially grateful to have a wonderfully collegial relationship with the Rev. Dr. Ken Simurro, Dean of the Foothills Conference.

The Conference funding arm, FESMOS (First English, St. Mark's and Our Saviour's) was created from the closing of the congregations whose initials make up its acronym. FESMOS funds are used to support regional ministries across denominational lines. These include Cornerstone Protestant Campus Ministry at the University of Albany, the Emergency Overflow Shelter at First, Albany, Troy Area United Ministries (TAUM), Schenectady Community Ministries (SCM) among other agencies.

I close this report with the message words similar to those I used last year: amidst all the uncertainty, fear and pain our nation has experienced in these past several years, I observe again that the tenacity and talents of pastors, leaders and the dedication of parishioners has made church still a place where the comfort of God's presence and the praise of God's name, still flourishes and God's call to us to work for justice still inspires and continues."

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Jo Page

Dean, Hudson Mohawk Conference

Niagara Frontier Conference Report

“I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” Isaiah 43:19

One Million Dollars. That’s approximately how much medical debt relief 13 churches combined to forgive. This was possible through prayerful collaboration with one another and with RIPMedicalDebt.org

I wanted to start on a high note because a lot of this report will be about transitions, legacy congregations, anxiety around decline, the struggle to communicate, and the need for more collaboration. All of that said we should never lose sight that Jesus is changing lives through our congregations. God is still creating new impactful ministries and the Spirit is breathing new life into many churches. Working together to highlight that one out of two Americans struggle with healthcare costs and to practice some forgiveness is one example of new energy and life at work in our communities. Another example is for our Spring Conference Assembly we are partnering with our Untied Methodist Siblings to offer Anti-Racism training during the assembly. Even in the midst of struggle new ways to respond to God’s free gift of Grace are happening in the Niagara Frontier.

After starting on a high note we should not ignore that many of our churches are struggling and or have been in transition. Assisting Congregations with becoming Legacy Congregations (Formerly called Holy Closure) and working with Congregations in the Call Process has taken up the majority of my time. For those that are unaware the process of closing a church in New York State can take 18 to 24 months and sometimes even longer. While some congregations have been blessed to experience a briefer call process, the truth is it can also take that long for a community to discern what long-term pastoral stability looks like. As Dean my role is often assisting congregations to find a local transition pastor for the immediate time after a called Pastor leaves. Additionally, I work closely with Assistant to the Bishop Rachel Sosebee to make sure Call Committees and Church Councils are all on the same page in regards to the process. This work also includes meeting with potential candidates answering their questions about WNY.

We continue to adapt as we best try to share the love of Jesus in 2023. Some of the changes we have made this year include Bishop Miller or Pastor Olear as Assistant to the Bishop, leading Instillation services. This has enabled many congregations to enjoy instillations on Sunday mornings, have more connection to Synod staff, and prevents me from having to take time away from my Call to Parkside. Another adaptation is that whenever a church council invites me to meet with them we spend time talking about congregational life cycle. This enables folks to identify where they are growing or struggling around issues of viability and sustainability. A Common theme is that many congregations have lost or need to renew their understanding of mission and purpose. Without a clear vision of who God is calling you to be as a community of faith than its incredibly challenging if not impossible to have sustained growth. But we are seeing at least a dozen churches experiencing growth, energy, and revitalization post Covid.

Finally, the last major focus of my role is communication. This happens through monthly Dean Notes. Email me here to sign up unysdeannf@gmail.com and it happens through phone calls and personal conversations. If you have a question do not hesitate to reach out. As we look to the future I hope to put more time into fostering and building our relationships with one another. Too many congregations, Pastors, and folks act as isolated islands. I know there can be a history as to why this is. I know sometimes there is pain, hurt, or even disappointment that leads to isolation. Not to mention we still are only recently removed from a pandemic where Isolation was how we practiced loving one another.

If I haven’t yet met with your leadership please invite me! If you haven’t attended a conference event check one out. Or sign up for the newsletters of congregations in the conference and go to their Chicken BBQ, send your

kids to their VBS, or just send an email letting them know you are praying for them. I am confident that God will make a way! I am also sure that partnership will be a part of the way that God makes.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Jeremiah P. Smith

Dean of the Niagara Frontier Conference

Southern Tier Conference Report

It has been another year of transitions. Working from West to East across the conference, the congregation of Bethany Lutheran Church in Elmira held a service of Thanksgiving at Conclusion of a Call for Pr. Roger Behrens in November. They are currently served by weekly supply preachers arranged through the hard work of Pr. Jennifer Long of Emmanuel in Corning. Pr. Behrens' wife Vicki stepped back from Synod Council shortly after his resignation from Bethany and the conference will appoint a new Synod Council Representative at its Spring Assembly.

We officially welcomed Pr. Jason Churchill as Campus Chaplain to Ithaca College and Cornell University and co-pastor of St. Luke Lutheran Church in Ithaca. He began his work last year and was installed in March.

Ecumenical partner The Rev Dr. Cheryl Ann Elfond, who had come out of retirement to serve Christ The King Lutheran Church in Vestal, retired again at the end of 2022. The congregation held a moving Thanksgiving at Conclusion of Call worship, with special music and much love. She assures me that her service to the church has not ended and began this (unofficial) service by sharing pictures and stories of a long longed-for trip to the Galapagos with her spouse Mary Lynne Flowers. Thank You for the spectacular pictures in the midst of messy winter!

During 2022, the congregation of Christ the King birthed our Conference's very first Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community (SAWC), Journey of Faith. They are explicitly organized around seeking and service, especially with those who have felt judged by the church and not by God: "While acknowledging our Christian faith, we welcome all who believe we are here to unconditionally serve one another with grace." They achieved SAWC status in November.

Pastor Jeff Bohan of Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Binghamton has been the Transition Pastor at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Endwell since Pr. Walck's retirement. In 2022 the people of Our Savior, in consultation with the people of Redeemer, called him to be their Pastor in addition to his time as Pastor of Redeemer. He was officially installed in October.

Also in October (on Reformation Sunday!) Pr. Laura Wade, of Christ Lutheran Church in Norwich, was called, again in consultation with the people of Christ Norwich, to be Pastor of St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Sidney in addition to her pastorate at Christ. St. Luke's had been served by Pastor and Dean The Rev. Dr. Ken Simurro since the retirement of Pr. Ernie Varga. I am profoundly grateful to the congregations of Christ Norwich, St. Luke's Sidney, Our Saviour Endwell, and Redeemer Binghamton, as well as to Pr's Bohan and Wade for the courage, creativity, and energy demonstrated in these processes.

Southwest Conference Report

Greetings from the Southwestern Conference.

This past year has seen the return to something a lot more like normal, the normal we knew before 2020 and the pandemic. While most of our congregations have not quite reached pre-pandemic worship attendance levels—at least in-person—a few have, and the rest are moving in that direction and activities are beginning to resume.

We had a number of significant changes in leadership in the conference this year. We bid Godspeed and farewell to two rostered leaders:

Deacon Lee Lindeman, who served for 17 years as executive director of Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Camp. Lee had a great track record at the camp and will be greatly missed. In his absence Rev Gail Swanson will serve as interim director;

Rev. Dr. Derek Cheek, who served as pastor of Immanuel in Olean for 19 years, and for the last 4 years as pastor of St John's in Allegany, and Dean of the SW Conference, accepted a call to serve as pastor of First Lutheran Cape Cod, MA. In his absence Pr. Shawn Hannon of Hope Arcade will serve as transitional pastor while those two congregations seek their next settle leader. Rev. Dan Buringrud, pastor of St Paul's in Ellicottville, has been elected to fill the rest of Derek's term as the new dean of the area;

We also welcomed two pastors:

Rev. Laura Csellak has taken over as the new chaplain at Lutheran in Jamestown.

First Lutheran in Jamestown called Rev. Mark Swanson. Both (husband and wife) are welcome additions to their ministry sites and the SW Conference as a whole. They bring a great deal to us and we are very grateful that God called them to this area!

The people of the SW Conference are ready to resume work in God's Kingdom!

Camp Reports

Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center, Inc.

Thanks be to God for continuing to sustain LCLC through another challenging yet rewarding year. Highlights from 2022 include the following:

- Summer camp returned to near pre-pandemic numbers, including a return to 6 weeks of programming.
- Retreat Center usage also returned to pre-pandemic numbers and continues to do well in the current year.
- Renovation work began on the Boathouse including a new steel roof, new windows, doors, siding, entrance deck, and septic and water connections.
- St. John's Hall, the summer camp dining hall, received a new steel roof and new doors and windows.

We continue to strive to provide programs for people of all ages, all year long. In addition to our summer youth camping opportunities, we also offer the following:

- Senior High Winter Retreat
- 4th-8th Grade Winter Retreat
- Senior Adult Fall Retreat
- Group Building for Church Councils

As always, we like to express our thanks to the benevolence of the Upstate New York Synod, Lutheran Charities of Western NY, St. John's Lutheran Home for Children, and the many congregations and individuals who financially support the ministry of LCLC so strongly. Such generous support is truly life giving.

On behalf of all of those involved in the ministry at LCLC, thank you for the opportunity to serve the needs of the congregations of the Upstate New York Synod.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Gail Swanson
Interim Executive Director

2022 Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Board of Directors

Tim Menasco (At-large)

Christopher Carpenter (At-large)

Chris George, Board President (At-large)

Steve Vesper, (Niagara Frontier)

Holly Freed (Niagara Frontier)

Rev. Jeff Hedin (Genesee-Finger Lakes)

Pam Warner (Southwestern)

Kyle Sorensen (Southwestern)

Kelsie Creamer (Genesee-Finger Lakes)

Rev. Deb Johnson (Genesee-Finger Lakes)

Rev. Lee Miller, II (Upstate NY Synod Bishop)

Lee Lindeman (Executive Director)

Lutheran Summer Gathering at Silver Bay



The fun and relaxing weeklong vacation for spiritual and physical renewal on beautiful Lake George!
Save the date - July 15-21, 2023

We were delighted to gather at Silver Bay on the shores of Lake George after a 2-year pandemic hiatus. Attendance was a bit lighter than our last full program year, but the joy at being together in person was palpable as we pondered the theme *Holy Ground*.



We were inspired in worship led by our Chaplain, Pastor Arden Strasser and challenged by classes with Pastors Julius Carroll on African American Lutheran History, Judith VanOsdol on Biblical Interpretation and Becca Erlich on Christian Minimalism. Pastor Amanda Nesvold was our Teen Leader. Joe Krupa once again graced us with his musicianship and led the choir in song. We were fascinated by presentations by Judith VanOsdol about the Lutheran World Federation, Peter Doliber about the Silver Bay Association, and Scott Rohrbach with brand new images from the James Webb Space Telescope.



We played together rejoicing in the beauty of God's creation. We swam and built sandcastles at Slim Point Beach. Artists created beautiful watercolors. The Lutherans beat the EMPS (Silver Bay Employees) in our annual softball game. Youth helped raise over \$2500 for World Hunger and children reveled in fun, games, and balloons at the carnival. We played chair volleyball and rocked on the porch. We roasted marshmallows for s'mores, sang camp songs at the firepit, and danced under the stars at the boathouse.

We were organized and energized by our new Activities Directors Amy Baumgardner and Scott Rohrbach. Laura Primiano kept us on track with our daily newsletter – the Punkee! Sarah Hoffman came on board as Assistant Registrar. Pastor Marie Jerge retired as the Dean (though she remains on the Planning Team). Arden Strasser will bring his creativity to that role. Rounding out the Planning Team: Chad Volkert – Executive Director, Karen (Mouse) Hoffman – Registrar, Sarah Hoffman – Assistant Registrar, Beth Smayda – Finance, Jim Bresnahan, Sue Hollar, Katie Bang, and Irene Wrenner.



The Rev. Marie Jerge, Dean/Director of Ministry | mariejerge@gmail.com | www.lutherans-silverbay.org

Campus Ministry Reports

Cornell University & Ithaca College

One of the great joys of 2022 Campus Chaplaincy has been the ability to be in person without interruptions such as shutdowns or isolation. This has been a year of re-grouping and re-imagining what Campus Chaplaincy means in the context of these two very different schools in Ithaca. Part of the re-imagining phase is exploring where St. Luke can most effectively engage students, faculty, and staff. Like many other Campus Ministries, the involvement of students in this liminal time of pandemic/endemic has been varied. An entire generation of students has come and gone without the “normal” operations of our campus ministry programs. That has given us space to dream. St. Luke is poised to re-open the doors for study hours during finals this year. This is a decades old program; however, this year is also a test for the future Campus Center at 109 Oak Ave – a place that is open not just during finals but during the entire academic term for coffee, treats, conversation, community, and study (take it slow...perhaps one day a week and build upon that).

In 2022 we confirmed a member of our Cornell community and will be sending a member of our Ithaca College community off to seminary in Philadelphia. We are overjoyed with the growth of our graduate school student membership and the unveiling of a comprehensive Alumni program that will engage our alums nationally.

Our Lenten program, Psalms and Soup, was co-hosted by The Episcopal Church at Cornell and had a lively group of students and staff exploring the plethora of Psalms and how they speak to our individual spiritual lives/journeys. Ithaca College Campus Chaplaincy initiated a program that we built with our American Baptist partner. It is called *The Spiritual Wisdom of the Bible; Meditations on the Beatitudes and Non-Violence*. This is a semester-based thematic program. 2022/2023 focused on the Beatitudes using the work of Father John Dear and his commentary on non-violence.

Music at St. Luke has also been involved with Campus Chaplaincy. They offer choral Compline every Thursday night – most of 2022 they were on campus in Anabel Chapel. Due to scheduling we returned to St. Luke, but still involve our campus communities in this fantastic evening service (mainly Cornell University).

Facing the existential threat of Christian nationalism on campuses (most pervasive in our context at Cornell) is something that we take seriously at St. Luke. Through engaging the World Student Christian Federation – WSCF, (whose history has a deep and abiding bond to Cornell University) we join with an historic movement of progressive Christians dedicated to peace, non-violence, and social justice for all people without exception.

To deepen ties with our co-workers in the Gospel, Pastor Jason Churchill stepped in as interim priest for the Episcopal Church at Cornell while Chaplain Taylor Danes was on parental leave. Additionally, St. Luke has engaged our interfaith friends at both universities in intentional dialogue and friendship. 2022 has been a significant year of building up our Campus Ministry with hopes to look towards the future of what it means to be part of this larger community of many faiths and people at both Cornell University and Ithaca College.

Grace and Peace,

The Rev. Jason Churchill

Senior Pastor & Campus Chaplain

St. Luke Lutheran Church and Lutheran Campus Ministry

LuMin Campus Ministry WNY to S.C.O.R.E

*“We gotta do much more than believe if wanna see the world change
We gotta do much more than believe if we really wanna change things
We gotta do much more than believe, go on try it, go on try it
We gotta do much more than believe if we wanna see the world change”*
from Dave Matthews Band

What a difference three years make in our collective lives together!

I came into this ministry called LuMin Campus Ministry of WNY in late 2019 and was excited to continue the journey of challenging and mentoring students to live out their faith, through action, no matter where their academic path was leading them. That they could combine the academic and the spiritual and put it to practical use-impacting the wider breadth of community beyond our church walls and faith spaces, living out the call of where Creator wants us to be.

2019 found me standing side by side with students at Daemen, as they protested policy and demanded change for the student body that they felt, was not being represented and cared for. I formed a bond with Daemen students, especially in the Diversity and Inclusion office and HEOP office as well. Tiffany Hamilton, the Director quickly became an ally and friend. I was called into doing strategic planning using community organizing tools, so that students could claim their own authenticity and still be wholly a part of the Daemen mission for its students. That was an exciting time to be a Campus pastor and I looked forward, to planning for the years before me.

2020 changed all of that.

As reflected in ongoing studies involving conversations with college students, especially based on their social location, the concern about involvement with community and social justice took top priority, especially with the advent of a global pandemic in 2020. What has been revealed is the enormous disparity with regards to systemic injustices regarding racial inequality, economic inequity, and food disparity, on top of the medical and mental health gaps that have affected not only the adults/family structures in their lives but also our college students overall. COVID-19 interrupted an important time in our students lives when they were on the cusp of understanding the real world and their purpose and place in it as recognized young adults. The question before us was how ritual, spirituality and faith life matter as this generation pushed back against the norm of racism, oppression and legalized violence. The norm of what could have been and what campus ministry was pre COVID and pre-new civil and human rights movement, was null and void. The college students of 2020 and beyond demanded asking for more honesty and transparency from faith institutions and organizations.

2020, with the pandemic and the death of George Floyd was unfortunately, a pivotal moment and we were faced, as leaders not only finding ways virtually to care for our students but also support the faculty and staff of our campuses at Daemen and UB. The CMA (Campus Ministry Association) at UB-our mission revolved around not only supporting our students-but also one another in a show of ecumenical and interfaith solidarity.

2021, continued with the same issues-with COVID, the January 6th insurrection and the exposure of disparity intersectional between race, class and economics. In addition, the fight for voting rights, immigration injustice and women's rights became an enormous concern in our students lives when they are on the cusp of understanding the real world and their purpose and place in it as recognized young adults.

What also came crystal clear, was the amount of food disparity that had occurred on our college campuses. Suddenly, food disparity was thrown into the mix and I began to shift some of my mission development work, into campus ministry. This set the stage for LuMin Campus Ministry partnering with Community of Good Neighbors-which is a contemporary Christian community as well as a growing Mobile Food Pantry, bringing nonperishable food groceries to Daemen-and the students were excited, appreciative and it allowed me to reconnect with students I had not physically seen in over a year, as restrictions began to relax. In addition, a number of professors and staff brought students from UB to do volunteering work in conjunction with CGN's Mobile Food pantry presence.

I was also elated to finally be invited onto Buffalo State College (now University) as both of my own young adults became BuffState Bengals, and was warmly welcomed by BuffState's president, the Dean of Student Affairs and other key people on campuses. Because of BuffState, CGN's new Mobile Food pantry bus was painted and a deeper relationship with other key offices, students and alumni formed. Overall, BuffState was and is thankful for my pastoral presence and my close proximity-and routinely invited me to be a part of campus life, which unfortunately included the deaths of two students both in 2021 and 2022. It should be noted that there was not a LuMin Campus Ministry presence until I began to engage, thanks in part to a number of my Board Members who were alumni and faculty.

LuMin was also present as the tragic and horrific events of May 14th-hitting home more so on Buffalo State's campus where many students, faculty and staff were from the East Side, and a sense of comfort and compassionate care was sorely needed. LuMin was one of many spaces where we invited people to grieve, to pray and to discern how we could show up for one another.

What I was also finding were students who more identified as spiritual not religious as well as both questioning the lack of action by the institutional Church and their righteous anger about how the Church was not showing up for people. Enter in Oasis Community-a community for those who identify as spiritual not religious, which also happens to be a part of my portfolio and my work as a Mission Developer. Along with CGN Buffalo, LuMin was now supported and seen as a center with three parts, caring for our students and empowering the student body and community. LuMin began the journey then to evolve into a spiritual development/discernment model where students can not only be informed but also equipped to do practical, faith-based work both in the classroom as well as beyond those boundaries and in the streets.

Campus Ministry is still going through rebirth and a reforming movement.

Our challenge now is what is the next phase of campus ministry and how can we show up for students? How do we become an non anxious presence on campuses, while respecting the different paths and journeys-especially with regards to faith and spirituality, of the students. What does it mean for Campus Ministry to lean into justice movements, creating opportunities for students to participate in those efforts, especially given the eradication of women's health, the stripping of protections for citizens because of whom they love, how they identify and what culture they represent. More importantly, the threat of education-the freedom to learn and explore; this impacts the students we serve.

Our goal as Campus Ministry is to facilitate a space where students can be authentically themselves and it is being reborn as S.C.O.R.E. Why the name change? Most of the current campus ministry sites have a name that students can easily recognize and is appealing. S.C.O.R.E: Student Collective Organizing for Restorative Environment. This gives it a purposeful meaning and invites students into a space of both living out their academic pursuits and utilizing their faith towards practical action. S.C.O.R.E is still committed to the mission of LuMin Campus Ministry.

Rochester Institute of Technology/National Tech. Inst. for the Deaf

2023 Spring Semester Report for “The Table” Campus Ministry

at Rochester Institute of Technology and National Technical Institute for the Deaf

Like everyone else, our campus ministry continues to find its way through the lingering effects of Covid. We are fortunate that we have not had to face severe restrictions caused by the pandemic.

We continue to have around a dozen or so students at worship every week. These students come from a variety of church backgrounds, but most are Lutheran or Episcopal. In addition to these ‘regular’ students, we have another dozen or so who worship with us occasionally throughout the semester.

Almost all the students stay for dinner after worship unless they have schoolwork to do or other pressing matters. This time of table fellowship has proven to be a great time to build relationships between me and the students and also between the students themselves. I’ve seen many close friendships develop over the years.

We are fortunate that congregations have been allowed to bring in Sunday night meals with very few restrictions. A few churches have served meals this past year and they usually join us for worship. I am really hoping (and praying) that more congregations will either resume their past practices of providing meals or begin this ministry. The students have always enjoyed the time of fellowship around the dining table.

We are also fortunate that RIT continues to provide us with worship, dining, kitchen and office space, as well as a copier and office supplies. In addition to facility usage, RIT has made funds available to our ministry which we can use to buy food for those dinners not supplied by congregations. We have also received some donations from alumni and the families of present students.

My deepest thanks for all that the Upstate New York Synod has done to support our shared ministry to our college students. My thanks also to the pastors and congregations of the Genesee Finger Lakes Conference for your gracious support. I am anxiously awaiting the time when life returns to normal (or at least, close to normal). Please continue to keep us in your prayers.

Yours in Christ’s Love & Service,

Pastor Craig Swanson, Chaplain

“The Table” Campus Ministry @ RIT & NTID

Syracuse Campus Ministry

2023 Report for Lutheran Campus Ministry in Syracuse

Student leadership has blossomed this past year in amazing ways, even though 4 university student organization leaders graduated this past December. The group took on the challenge of passing the mantle of responsibility to other students. They in-turn this spring have been recruiting younger students to take on leadership roles for the coming year. We began the year with an outreach trip to the great NY State Fair with 26 students attending. This year our student organization developed a logo to go with their name “Campus Connect” which corresponds to Lutheran Campus Ministry’s formal logo, including the same byline: “welcoming all, serving others.”

Our weekly international cuisine dinners have been exceptionally rich this year with attendance of over 20 every week of the year. Some highlights were the visit from Bishop Lee Miller II when he shared stories from his trip to the Middle East and the ensuing discussion about peace and barriers to peace in the Middle East and around the globe. We sang Karaoke, learned Calligraphy, washed feet on Holy Thursday and enjoyed authentic home cooked food with some of the student chefs calling home for recipes and preparation advice. This year we served as a home away from home for a group of exchange students from Japan, who were at the university specifically to learn English, and they greatly enriched our community. We have continued our weekly tutor/mentor program, Success Saturday for K-12 Syracuse city schools with 40 college students giving their time and sharing their experiences to help youth progress academically and build up their confidence in themselves.

Koinonia House, our intentional service-learning faith community had four student residents, one majoring in Art therapy, one in Museum studies, one in African American studies, one in illustration.

This is the 3rd year of Sunday worship at 5:30pm followed by a fellowship dinner. The time works well for many students, especially our talented musicians. We are blessed with uplifting worship each week that is live streamed on our LCM SU/ESF Facebook page.

Our “Chaplains’ Campaign to Honor the Past and Secure the Future” was publicly announced on Nov. 1st. This year we lost The Rev. Paul Bosch, LCM’s first full time chaplain, who answered St. Peter’s call to his heavenly home on the morning of his 95th birthday. He will be greatly missed but his life and work continue to inspire many. His book, *Wonder, Love and Praise*, created for our campaign is an ongoing legacy. We are presently working on the creation of a podcast Bible study on the gospel of John, chapter 3, based on the work of our second full time chaplain, the Rev. Rick Bair. The mission of bringing the gospel to young people on campus as they are deciding their futures is the work of the whole church.

Ministry Reports

1517 Media

1517 Media

Augsburg Fortress
Beaming Books
Broadleaf Books
Fortress Press
Sparkhouse

10 Things to Know about 1517 Media

Spring 2023

1. The *All Creation Sings* family of resources continues to expand, including the *Assembly Song Companion to All Creation Sings*, the *Ensemble Setting of Holy Communion (Setting 12)*, and the soon-to-be-released braille edition. We continue to add online resources that can help you use this liturgy and song supplement to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* to enliven your congregation's worship. augsburgfortress.org/allcreationsings
2. Kids will find new ways to explore and learn about Lutheran worship with the newly updated *Kids Celebrate* series, featuring topics like Worship, Creation, the Trinity, and Hymns and Songs. *A Time to Say Goodbye: A Booklet for Kids about Funerals* helps kids understand what happens during a Lutheran funeral. augsburgfortress.org/for-kids
3. This summer we invite kids to learn what it means to become members in God's world with *Operation Restoration*, a new Vacation Bible School based on Daniel Erlander's timeless works. This flexible VBS complements other Erlander resources: *A Place for You* (Holy Communion), *Come to the Water* (Holy Baptism), *Baptized, We Live* (introduction to Lutheranism), and *Manna and Mercy* (the biblical narrative). augsburgfortress.org/operationrestoration
4. Fortress Press continues its legacy of publishing compelling theological, biblical, and ethical books for the church and the world in which it lives. Recent and upcoming releases include *The Everyday Advocate: Living Out Your Calling to Social Justice* by Deacon Ross Murray, *Blessing and Beseeching: Seventy Prayers Inspired by the Scriptures* by Gail Ramshaw, and *So That All May Flourish: The Aims of Lutheran Higher Education* by a veritable "who's who" of Lutheran higher education, a must read for everyone concerned about the work being done on Lutheran campuses. fortresspress.com
5. Our Broadleaf Books imprint explores the expanse of human experience—seeking to deepen faith and understanding and bring wholeness to readers and society. Recent releases include *Ordinary Blessings for Parents: Prayers, Poems and Meditations for Family Life* by Rev. Meta Herrick Carlson, *Red State Christians: A Journey into White Christian Nationalism and the Wreckage It Leaves Behind* by Rev. Angela Denker, and *What Makes You Come Alive: A Spiritual Walk with Howard Thurman* by Dr. Lerita Coleman Brown. broadleafbooks.com
6. For a low annual fee, Sparkhouse provides access through *Sparkhouse Digital* to a wide range of regularly refreshed resources for early childhood, children, and youth. Subscribers can access new digital activity kits that help congregations provide resources for use in the home or as a supplement to in-person faith formation activities. sparkhousedigital.com
7. Congregations looking to bridge connections with families during the summer will find, *Families Celebrate Summer* an excellent resource. This colorful deck of 56 cards is full of faith-based activities, rituals, reflections, and other ideas for families to try at home and on the go. augsburgfortress.org/familiescelebrate
8. This spring Sparkhouse released *Remind Me Again: Poems and Practices for Remembering Who We Are*, a collection of 41 poems by Joe Davis that will inspire, challenge, and affirm readers from all stages of life. This fall, a facilitator guide by Rev. Jia Starr Brown will help youth and adults engage with the poetry and encourage meaningful discussions and connections to your own community. augsburgfortress.org/remind-me-again
9. Beaming Books continues its mission to publish high-quality children's books that help kids thrive in every part of who they are—emotionally, socially, and spiritually. Recent and upcoming releases include *I Am Not Afraid: Psalm 23 for Bedtime, Wherever You Are*, and *Pause, Breathe, Be: A Kid's 30-Day Guide to Peace and Presence*. beamingbooks.com
10. Frolic Preschool, Frolic Nursery, and Frolic Family introduce little ones to faith concepts in age-appropriate ways. The award-winning Frolic Storybooks are now available in affordable paperback bundles that make great gifts for kids in your communities. wearesparkhouse.org/frolic

Want to learn more? Follow us on social media. Sign up for our free eNewsletters at augsburgfortress.org | wearesparkhouse.org | fortresspress.com | beamingbooks.com | broadleafbooks.com

ELCA Chaplaincy Services



April 30, 2023

Upstate New York Synod PO Box 160

Syracuse, NY 13214

Dear Friends in Christ,

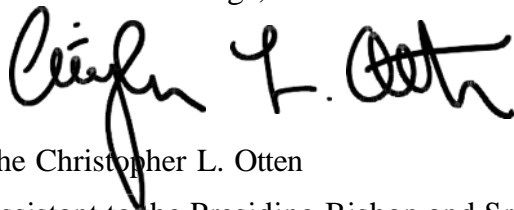
On behalf of the 800 chaplains who serve in specialized ministries, please accept our sincere thanks for the gift of crocheted pocket prayer squares donated to our ministry from your synod. Your commitment to our shared ministry is a reminder of the important bonds we have in this ministry. The pocket prayer squares were appreciated. As ministry changes over the years, so do the needs of those who serve in chaplain roles. We encourage folks to donate to the prayer book fund which provides prayer books to military, VA and prison chaplains. Our office can provide APO addresses to send care packages to our deployed chaplains. In those care packages, things like wet ones, beef jerky, granola/protein bars are greatly appreciated by the chaplains and those they serve. These are items are not often available in the local commissary or in the battle encampments.

As you are most likely aware, this office supports the life and work of ELCA chaplains called by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and/or the 65 synods. These pastors and deacons serve people in the military, veterans, inmates and staff of the bureau of prisons, and family members of these different groups as well as in state and local prisons, local hospitals and other institutions and their families. In every setting, our chaplains accompany others on the journey of faith, wherever their life and circumstances may take them.

You are part of this ministry in the name of Jesus.

Thank you for your thoughtfulness, and we pledge to continue our efforts to extend the grace and mercy of God on your behalf.

Peace and blessings,



The Christopher L. Otten

Assistant to the Presiding Bishop and Sr. Director, ELCA
Chaplaincy Ministries

Gender Justice Task Force

Since last year's synod assembly, we have worked on a resolution that is, as of this writing, currently in process of being edited for the Synod Assembly to vote on, designating a seat on the Synod Council for a member of the LGBTQIA2S+ community.

We have also been discussing how best to serve the congregations of the Upstate New York Synod to learn about gender justice issues and advocate for them. We have been educating ourselves on what is going on now with state governments making laws that harm the transgender community specifically.

And, with the encouragement of DEM Imani Olear, we have begun meeting together with the Racial Justice Task Force periodically to work on issues that intersect both racial and gender justice. We have been working on our workshop presentations for this year's Synod Assembly.

We are available for any congregations or other church groups who would like to host a presentation or workshop surrounding justice issues.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Tonya Eza

Chair of the Gender Justice Task Force

Global Ministry Team Report

Pastor Deron Milleville gsglenvillepastor@gmail.com (518) 791-7251

Beth Walker rbowsend@rochester.rr.com or (315) 945-5539

The Upstate NY Global Ministry Team (GM) convenes as needed to promote relationships and accompaniment with our global companions and provides resources for congregational engagement with ministries around the globe. New committee members are desired and welcome. Contact one of the co-chairs for more information.

Mission Statement

Make accompaniment in Global Ministry concrete for congregations of the Upstate New York Synod.

2022-2023 Global Ministries Report

2022-2023 highlights

1. **Pentecost Sunday has been designated as Companion Synod Sunday.** Remember our global companions, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe (ELCZ) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia (ELCZa) in your prayers, with music, and with education.
2. **The ELCA Africa Desk has adopted five strategic emphases:**
 - Theological Education
 - Leadership Development and Training
 - Peace and Reconciliation
 - Youth and Young Adults
 - Gender Justice

The UNYS Global Ministry Team is working to identify local, engaging goals in alignment with one or more of these. More news to come.

3. **Lifechanging! Host or be hosted.** The UNYS Global Ministry Team promotes lay and rostered leader exchanges with our global companions. Suggested time for traveling to a companion is 4 or more weeks, embedded in a single parish. Suggested time to host a pastor or lay leader in your congregation is 4 or more months. Please contact one of the co-chairs for more information!
4. **Accompaniment Values Tracker** created by the UNYS GM team is a way to assess your local and international relationships and create dialogue about the five accompaniment values: Mutuality, Inclusivity, Vulnerability, Empowerment, and Sustainability. The tracker defines engagement in these values across four strength-based levels of Exploring, Emerging, Practicing, and Sustaining/Modeling. A great conversation starter. Email Beth Walker at rbowsend@rochester.rr.com with questions, for copy, or to schedule a workshop on using the tracker.
5. **We give thanks for The Rev. Kristin Engstrom, ELCA missionary to the ELCZa, Zambia.**
I am excited to share that I have a new call as an ELCA global missionary!! I will be serving as the Facilitator for Leadership Development and Capacity Building with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zambia.

You can follow Rev. Engstrom in multiple ways:

- Email kristin.engstrom@elca.org
- Website alongwithpastorkristin.blogspot.com
- Instagram [laviedesprit](https://www.instagram.com/laviedesprit)

As an individual or congregation, sponsor Kristin

- By check: Make payable to “Evangelical Lutheran Church in America” with “Kristin Engstrom GCS2031” in the memo line.
- Give through your synod office or mail your check to: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Gift Processing Center, P.O. Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009.
- By credit or debit card: See ELCA.org/MissionaryGiving or call 800-638-3522 and specify “Kristin Engstrom GCS2031.”
- By automatic monthly bank withdrawal, or to establish a covenant of prayer, communication, and support: Contact 800-638-3522, ext. 2820, or email globalchurch@elca.org.

6. **Young Adults in Global Mission** invites ELCA young adults ages 21-29 into a transformative, year-long journey in international service. As they offer themselves in service, ELCA young adults are shaped by the witness of our global neighbors. They share in the journeys of companion churches and organizations in one of nine countries around the world. If you are interested participating, please visit [Young Adults in Global Mission - Evangelical Lutheran Church in America \(elca.org\)](http://YoungAdultsinGlobalMission-EvangelicalLutheranChurchinAmerica.elca.org)
7. **Bookmark the UNYS Global Mission/World Hunger Facebook page** for the latest news [\(10\) World Hunger & Global Mission - ELCA Upstate NY Synod | Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/10WorldHungerGlobalMission-ELCAUpstateNYSynod/)

Hunger Team Report

“We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish ...all ate and were filled.”

—from Matthew 14:13-21

While we cannot be present in all places in the world where hunger and poverty exists, our donations to ELCA World Hunger support the work of partners who are on the ground providing help and hope for a brighter future in 65 countries including the United States. Your contributions are vital to the continuation of this life-giving ministry.

The Synod Hunger Justice Team meets regularly throughout the year and continues its work to (1) encourage giving to ELCA World Hunger; (2) raise awareness about the problem of hunger and poverty in the U.S. and worldwide; (3) advocate for public policies that provide support for those who lack basic necessities; and (4) review and evaluate Domestic Hunger Grant applications. We are currently meeting via Zoom and welcome anyone interested in participating. Contact Maureen Gensler mgensler@gmail.com for information.

Since 1999, an annual synod-wide appeal has been coordinated with a specific theme. Donations are collected at the synod assembly. In 2022, more than \$30,000 was raised to purchase cows. One dairy cow can produce a few gallons of milk each day, a calcium-packed source of nutrition for a family.

Plans for the 2023 Synod Assembly – “Bee Generous–Plant Seeds of Justice” -- are well underway and each congregation is invited and challenged to collect \$420 or more for the purchase of two bee colonies (\$20 each) and two community gardens (\$200 each). Donations will be tallied at the hunger table at the assembly.

A large portion of our time is spent reviewing and evaluating Domestic Hunger Grant applications. Interviews are conducted with each applicant and recommendations are submitted based on a specific set of rubrics. Final determinations are made by a table of reviewers at the ELCA. Through these grants, your donations to ELCA World Hunger are currently supporting two ministries in Upstate NY: Loads and Loaves of Love, St. Mark’s, Baldwinsville and Open Door Mission, Glens Falls. For information about grants and how to apply, go to: <https://www.elca.org/domestichungergrants>

In addition to Domestic Hunger Grants, ELCA World Hunger offers Daily Bread Matching Grants. Learn more and sign up at <https://tinyurl.com/2p8dvetv>

Your donations make a tremendous difference in people’s lives, becoming bread and fish, clean water, life and hope for people who otherwise may not be able to survive. We thank God for all of you as we celebrate the good work that is taking place as a result of your faithful response to God’s love and mercy.

Members of the Hunger Justice Team:

Melissa Bedell, Maureen Gensler (Chair), Terry Gensler, Carole Grove, Pr. Marsha Irmer, Ann Myers, Pr. Dave Preisinger, Claudia Wolfgang

LutheranCare in Clinton, New York



Community Wellness Partner's to Affiliate with The St. Luke Family of Caring

The St. Luke Family of Caring (an affiliation of St. Luke Health Services, Bishop's Commons and St. Francis Commons) in Oswego, NY along with Community Wellness Partners (an affiliation of LutheranCare (Clinton, NY) and Presbyterian Homes & Services (New Hartford, NY) is excited to announce an intent to affiliate. Together, the multi campus, multi-level service providers plan to fully affiliate once the legal components of the agreement have been completed, which are anticipated to happen within the next few months.

This affiliation will continue to honor and uphold the tradition of both organizations with no disruption in day-to-day operations. The intended changes will be focused mainly in the areas of strategy, operations, and finance. Catherine Gill, St. Luke CEO and Administrator will be retiring on June 30th. Jeremy Rutter, President and CEO of Community Wellness Partners will expand his role to include CEO of *The St. Luke Family of Caring* affiliates. Shelly Youngs, St. Luke's current Assistant Administrator, will assume the role as Administrator of St. Luke Health Services (Oswego, NY) upon Gill's retirement.

This partnership enables all organizations encompassed by this affiliation the opportunity to remain as nonprofit, community/faith based organizations while laying the groundwork to grow and become stronger financially as they align their goals with the landscape of healthcare changes. This affiliation was designed to not only maintain the integrity of the organizations but to improve the quality and clinical reach of senior care in Central New York.

"This new alliance of our nonprofit health care communities is committed to maintaining the integrity and community based services we have all collectively provided throughout the years. It is an honor to serve our communities and we intend to continue to grow as we meet the needs of those in our care," said Jeremy Rutter, President and CEO of Community Wellness Partners, speaking on behalf of the organizations.



St. Luke CEO Catherine Gill is pleased to have facilitated the next step in the evolution of the organization, and is satisfied knowing that the community-based not-for-profits to which she has dedicated her thirty-five year career will be left in good hands. “This anticipated affiliation allows St. Luke the opportunity to remain non-profit, which is so important to me and the community we serve. I have every confidence that Jeremy and our teams will be able to continue to deliver high quality care. This avenue provides greater benefit to us rather than the alternative of for-profit. By aligning with CWP and their non-profit senior care communities, we are able to re-invest back into our employees, operations and community. I believe this leads to better care for those we serve and a better environment in which to work for our team members.”

The continuum of services will include skilled nursing, licensed home health care, adult day care (medical and social), assisted living, adult home, enriched housing, palliative care, memory care, independent senior housing, inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation, empire state supportive housing, and community-based services that support health and independence.

The St. Luke Board of Directors, together with the Boards of Directors of Community Wellness Partners have been actively engaged in deliberate discussions for nearly a year, in an effort to ensure that the intent to affiliate best serves their respective communities, while furthering the mission of each.

St. Luke Board of Directors President Jerome Mirabito noted, “We are keenly aware of the role St. Luke, Bishop’s Commons and St. Francis Commons have in the delivery of residential and healthcare services and are only taking this step because we are confident that an affiliation with Community Wellness Partners ensures the integrity of our services and furthers the viability of each, respectively.”

“Community Wellness Partners has a long history of providing high quality care to, primarily, elderly residents of Central New York, stated Board of Directors Chairman Jay Williams. “We are very pleased to be moving forward with providing those services now in Oswego County through this anticipated affiliation with a respected and well established partner in that community.”



Increasing financial pressures throughout the sector have led to the closure or sale of many of New York State’s nonprofit skilled nursing facilities over the past five years. Presbyterian Homes & Services and LutheranCare were two organizations facing just that. In an attempt to be proactive, they affiliated in 2016 and have shown great success through efficiencies. “This model works. We have proven it works. We recognize that partnering allows us to share best practices and expertise across a broader provider-base leading to a healthcare delivery system that is both financially stable and transformative in nature. It also gives us the ability to invest in what matters most, and that is people.” stated Rutter.

Combining over 150 years of service, Community Wellness Partners is a faith-based, 501(c) (3) nonprofit affiliation of LutheranCare and Presbyterian Homes & Services. This affiliation offers the most complete continuity of health and wellness services for older adults in Oneida County New York. Community Wellness Partners employs nearly 600 employees who service over 500 older adults each day throughout its continuum, which includes Home Care, Independent Living and Assisted Living, Rehabilitation, Skilled Nursing and more.

The St. Luke Family of Caring is an affiliation of community-based, not-for-profit, residential and healthcare organizations serving the Greater-Oswego County, NY area since 1975. Affiliates include St. Luke Health Services, Bishop’s Commons Enriched Housing Residence and St. Francis Commons Assisted Living Residence located on their healthcare campus in the City of Oswego. Together they provide a continuum of residential options, care and services to over 300 people daily, and employ over 400 people in the community.

Through this partnership, *The St. Luke Family of Caring* and Community Wellness Partner’s will be among the top 10 long term care providers in New York State.

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Lutheran Disaster Response

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Upstate New York Synod

2023 Report to Synod Assembly

Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR) is a ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The program is designed to bring hope and healing to those affected by disaster, locally in Upstate New York, across the United States and around the world.

The COVID pandemic crisis has changed and continues to change our lives. The “uptick” of violence in our localities has risen. These unfortunate events have caused harm to persons in schools, houses of worship as well as businesses and homes. These events have exhausted first responders, caregivers and hospital staffs.

One of our many responsibilities is to help prepare congregations for events that might have a direct impact on their day to day operations. Disasters take on many different shapes and forms. No disaster is the same. We can assist with the preparation of disaster plans that fit the needs of individuals and individual congregations.

What can you do to help? Pray, Give and Connect. How do you do that? Go to the ELCA website (ELCA.org) and click on the Resource icon and choose Lutheran Disaster Response. There is a wealth of information advising what can be done by individuals as well as groups. It is important that you know that 100 percent of all donations to LDR are used to support disaster response.

Are you, your family, and congregation prepared for a disaster no matter what form it may take? Remember what NIMBY stands for (Not in my backyard)? Your backyard is closer that you may think.

Respectfully submitted,
Gary R. Roller, Team Chair
Lutheran Disaster Response
Upstate New York Synod
ldrnyteam@gmail.com

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service



Lutheran Immigration
and Refugee Service

Partners in Ministry,

For many of us, 2022 represented a moment of hope. After the darkness and isolation of the pandemic, life has begun to return to normal –offering new opportunities for connection and renewed commitment to serving our neighbor.

Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service has embraced this moment; in the past year, we have grown exponentially in both size and scale, expanding our capacity to welcome immigrants and refugees.

With the help of people of faith and communities like yours, we were able to...

- help **16,690 children** reunify with their families or find safe, loving foster homes
- resettle nearly **12,000 Afghans** forced to flee after Afghanistan fell under Taliban control
- welcome **3,169 refugees** from countries across the world
- assist **18,262 people** seeking safety from Central America and beyond

We continue to expand our slate of innovative programming to move beyond traditional resettlement into an empowered living experience that promotes not just surviving, but thriving.

That work reaches, too, into our media and advocacy footprint. You may have seen LIRS President and CEO Krish O'Mara Vignarajah on national news programs like *PBS Newshour*, *MSNBC*, *NPR*, the *BBC*, and others, advocating on behalf of our immigrant and refugee neighbors from Ukraine to Venezuela.

"You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

It remains a priority of ours in 2023 to combat the divisive, xenophobic rhetoric surrounding immigration and instead promote kindness, compassion, and inherent human dignity.

We invite you to join us in that work! This year, we will continue to offer opportunities to get involved in the work of welcome, including:

- advocating alongside LIRS and our newest neighbors in celebration of [World Refugee Day](#) on June 20th,
- sharing notes of welcome with children and families impacted by immigration detention through LIRS' [Hope for the Holidays™ program](#) each fall,
- and equipping leaders and faith communities to create more just and welcoming communities through the [LIRS Ambassador Network](#) and [EMMAUS Network for Congregations](#) throughout the year.

Together, we can realize Jesus's ministry of compassion and welcome. We're so grateful for your support and look forward to working alongside you in the coming year.

In peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chelsey Johnson".

Chelsey Johnson, LIRS Mobilization and Faith Relations

National Headquarters: 700 Light Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21230 | Phone: 410-230-2700 | Fax: 410-230-2890 | www.LIRS.org

Advocacy Office: 110 Maryland Avenue NE, Suite 506/507, Washington, DC 20002 | Phone: 202-381-1030 | Fax: 202-330-5807

New York State Council of Churches



The New York State Council of Churches, founded in the late 19th Century, represents 7,500 congregations across the State of New York. We are comprised of nine partner denominations including American Baptist Churches USA, Empire Baptist Missionary Convention (National Baptist Convention), The Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Presbyterian Church USA, The Reformed Church in America, The Religious Society of Friends, United Church of Christ, and The United Methodist Church. In January of 2023, the Council was blessed to hire Rashida Tyler as a full time Deputy Executive Director and Manager of our Housing Pre-Development program. Ms. Tyler has extensive community organizing experience and holds masters degrees in African American Womens Studies and Public Policy. She is an active laywoman in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

The New York State Council of Churches:

Certifies and supports Protestant chaplains in Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, Office of Mental Health, and Office of Children and Family Services as they seek to offer love and hope to so many who feel hopeless and have had little experience of being loved unconditionally. We urge fully ordained pastors, including those who may be serving as parish ministers, to consider applying for certification. The Department of Corrections and Community Supervision is in particular need of candidates to fill a number of openings. In October, we hold our annual chaplain's conference to which all are welcome.

Equips faith leaders to advocate for laws and policies, consistent with our denominational partner's social principles, which address structural racism, economic inequality, and environmental degradation

Leading up our advocacy day on March 20, we held 10 seminars covering all the major policy areas. During advocacy day, we focused on passing a comprehensive housing package which included the Housing Compact requiring municipalities to alter restrictive race-based zoning rules which would make possible an increase in housing production. We also sought a variety of tenant protections. As of this writing, few housing provisions appear headed for passage except for a housing access voucher program and rental relief for public housing residents. In addition, we embraced our denominational partners historic commitment to immigration reform by promoting a suite of state-based immigration policies including increased assistance for asylum seekers, access to representation in deportation proceedings and health insurance and housing access vouchers accessible to undocumented people. We also worked hard to prevent changes to bail and discovery laws while advocating for a variety of environmental laws and funding to move New York towards a clean energy future. We are currently working on passage of a bill, in conjunction with Jubilee USA and most of our denominational partners, to compel private New York creditors to offer the same debt relief to struggling countries as public entities. We will also continue our efforts to stop 1 billion dollars in annual wage theft and to promote a variety of criminal justice reforms including calling on the legislature to recommend to voters an amendment to the New York Constitution to eliminate low wage, slave labor practices in our penal system. In the wake of the Buffalo Tops Shooting, the Council has advocated for gun control legislation and restorative measures in East Buffalo. At our

annual awards dinner we recognized many Buffalo community leaders advocating for the end of violence and social investment.

On a Federal level, we participated in National Ecumenical Advocacy Days in April, 2023 which is supported by most of our denominational partners. This year the focus will be on the reallocation of resources spent on the military to social programs. The Council will ardently work with our denominations and many coalitions to preserve and strengthen SNAP, TANF, affordable housing and many other social programs and oppose any cuts as a pre-condition for raising the debt ceiling.

All of our policy asks reflect our commitment to reverse structural racism.

Promotes mission consistent development of church property. The Council and three other partners--Interfaith Assembly on Homelessness and Housing, Interfaith Affordable Housing Collaborative and Bricks and Mortals--received a generous grant from Trinity Church Wall Street to help us consult with congregations in New York City about repurposing their property to build affordable housing but also consider non-housing uses of their property. In addition, the Council offers assessments and, in some cases access to grants, to congregations outside of New York City seeking to develop their property for affordable housing. Our predevelopment process is carefully detailed at WWW.IAHCNY.org. We continue to offer consultation with our partner, Crauderueff Associates, to congregations across the state to help them solarize and save money while sharing the financial benefits with their parishioners and the community at large. We will continue to offer Who is My Neighbor Seminars which offer expert guidance on property development and solar. Seminars can be found at WWW.NYSCOC.ORG.

The Council strongly encourages all congregations to advocate for the homeless and precariously housed in their community including the construction and preservation of affordable housing.

We are committed to ecumenical and interfaith work and see building relationships across secular and religious lines as central to our mission. In the past year, we continue to advocate for religious freedom and human rights in India and Israel/Palestine. Our ecumenical work is complemented by our participation in the National Council of Churches, the International Religious Freedom Roundtable, the India Working Group, and the Federation of Indian American Christian Organizations of North America. We are increasingly working with the National Council of Churches to embrace their position against Christian Nationalism while helping them to shape policies on other forms of religious nationalism to be considered and adopted in 2024.

We thank our denominational partners for their support. You can view learn about all of our programs on our website. WWW.NYSCOC.ORG. We are next to the Capital in Albany at 85 Chestnut Street, 12210. Office email is nyscocalbany@gmail.com phone is 518-436-9319. The Reverend Peter Cook is Executive Director and can be reached at pcook@nyscoc.org or 508 380-8289. Rashida Tyler is the Deputy Executive Director and can be reached at Rtyler@nyscoc.org or 845-282-6022.

Portico Report

Helping Members Refill Their Cup with Responsive Benefits

PORTICO[®]
Benefit Services | A Ministry of the ELCA

In 2022, Portico invited plan members to use their full range of benefits to care for themselves following the challenges and stress of the last few pandemic years. We continually seek cost-effective and nimble ways to support ELCA leaders, congregations, and organizations with high-quality, innovative, and stable benefits that promote holistic well-being.

- ELCA-Primary health benefits provided both in-person and virtual access to health care and wellness resources.
- Portico's Financial Planners and LSS of Minnesota helped ELCA Retirement Plan members navigate the weight of rising interest rates and market downturns through no- or low-cost financial planning, coaching services, and financial education.

In recent years, we've added several eligible ELCA- and full-communion-partner organizations to the Portico community. Growing the number of members we serve helps us manage costs and offer innovative benefits not typically available to smaller groups, affirming the importance of church together.



The Rev. Jeff Thiemann
President & CEO

Meeting the Need in 2022

232

Podcast Plays

Of the "Creative Approaches to Innovative Ministry" episode of Being Here last year.

16,002

Total Pounds Lost

Through the Omada prevention program since it launched in 2018, with 2,643 pounds lost in 2022.

591

Retired

With Portico's bundled benefits program — Congratulations to these faithful servants!

1,132

Webinar Views

Of the annual Retirement Readiness Series (live and on-demand).

3,080

Medical Visits via Text Based Care

Through 98point6[®], our virtual primary health care service.

9.75%

Increase in Net Membership

Over the past 5 years.

3,952

Health & Fitness Classes Completed

On Portico's online Burnalong platform.

Over \$2M

Debt Paid Off

By plan members working with LSS of Minnesota financial counseling since the partnership began.

86%

Very Satisfied

With our Customer Care Center, certified for excellence since 2015.

Data as of Dec. 31, 2022; sources available upon request. Availability of and eligibility for benefits will vary.

60-302 (2/2023)

Racial Justice Task Force Report

“Even when they call your truth a lie, tell it anyway, tell it anyway.”
Quote from the late Rev. Dr. Katie G. Cannon, Womanist theologian.

Dr. Cannon’s words are ringing truer these days because of how our society is crumbling backwards, even as hands are moving to shape and mold and transform who we are as people, for the common good; towards equity and equality. Both civil and human rights for many of our siblings of faith and of humanity are under duress; access to an unbiased education and academics for our youth and young adults is being tested and the freedom of wisdom and knowledge is being questioned. You may ask yourself as you are reading this, is what does this have to do with our faith? We have concerns right here in our communities and congregations! Our membership is decreasing, our churches are closing-must we be burdened with one more task that seemingly is outside our walls, and may not even directly impact the places we worship or the neighborhoods we live in?

Clearly, when Jesus spoke with His disciples and those who were following Him, “Go, and make disciples”, it not only spoke about sharing the Good News, but also, putting our faith in action. This is what we hear at the Table-that we are loved and beloved, forgiven and then to go and do likewise. That is the call we have answered and are committed to as your Synod’s Racial Justice Task Force.

We give thanks to the leadership this past year of Rev. Dr. Kenneth Simurro and Rev. Tara Eastman as co-convenors for RJTF as we worked toward what it meant to be called to do this work and explored various justice issues throughout the Synod, New York State and collaborated with other RJTFs in other Synods as to their challenges, struggles and accomplishments in doing this work-one being, what does it mean for this Synod to collectively be identified as being an anti-racist Synod. That means, being identified publicly as a Synod whom welcomes authentically those of our siblings who are BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and other Persons of Culture/Language) and that we have collectively, addressed and done the difficult work of addressing systemic racism and white supremacy in our churches that needs to be a focal point if we indeed are following Jesus’s commandment of “Loving one another as much as we love Creator God.” That commandment encompasses the hard but rewarding work that we must do as people of faith, and it is a continuous educational and spiritual journey-not with band aid.

This was painfully clear as the events of 5/14 shook the entirety of Buffalo and New York itself. We remember those 10 beloved elders, daughters, aunties, uncles, sons and community members who lost their lives and made a huge hole in the East Side, now robbed of their presence. As people of Faith, and as Lutherans, we must work together towards the achievement and continuous efforts to create sacred spaces in our faith communities and be justice minded and orientated in everything we do.

The Racial Justice Task Force is available with anti-racism trainings, workshops or simply holding space in person or through Zoom to talk about what it means to tackle issues of justice, be it access to education, clean environment and water, employment and essential health and mental health resources for all. We also are combining our efforts on justice with our Gender Justice task force to be visible and supportive to one another and to you, in whatever way we can be of assistance. Know that your Racial Justice Task Force team not only talks the talk, but also walks the walk, as I have challenged them to get involved with community based, justice committed organizations where they live and represent as both people of faith and as members of the RJTF. So, I give thanks for the work of Tom Craig, Melissia Bedell, Hans DeBruyn, Rev. Dana Smith, Rev. Jason Churchill, Rev. Miranda Hammer and our DEM, Rev. Imani Olnear along with the continued encouragement of Bishop Lee Miller, to play a vital role in restorative justice throughout the church. We will continue to do the work we were called to do and know that we are here for you, as a resource, in sibling love.

The Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman said, “It cannot be denied that too often the weight of the Christian movement has been on the side of the strong and the powerful and against the weak and oppressed—this, despite the gospel.”

We must remember the promises we made in our baptism, turn towards the Holy Spirit and away from the Empire and make that freeing, liberating change.

Submitted,

The Rev. Kwame Pitts, Th.M

Convenor, Racial Justice Task Force.

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

Seafarers International House

MESSAGE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR: Lighthouses Always and Now

Dear friends of Seafarers International House (SIH):

"Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven." Matthew 5:16

I write this to you early in our 150th anniversary year 2023 as I reflect on the year prior, 2022, and our "branding symbol" of the lighted lighthouse. I'm always aware of the 2 million "people on the way" - seafarers and migrants - who have found a lighted welcome on their own dark and often unsafe journeys to the port of New York, and subsequent other ports, over these past 150 years. The Gospel writer Matthew takes that light metaphor and expands it to have Jesus say that not only are **all** of us the lights of the world, but that we are lights for the world **now**. Not some quaint lighthouse symbol from 150 years ago, but now, today, as we welcomed 20,000 seafarers and 23 asylees from 15 countries in 2022 alone.

Although we have had two retirements from faithful long-serving port chaplains this year, Revs. Luisito Destreza and William Rex, the light continues to shine as we have two additional port chaplains, Pastors Kate Drefke and Lowell Chilton in Albany. In 2022, almost 3,000 Christmas-at-Sea satchels were collected and distributed - a new all-time record of light shared.

The scenarios might be a bit different from year to year, but the approach is always the same: we give housing (subsidized for seafarers and free to immigrants) as well as practical and spiritual support providing a lighthouse welcome.

Here in Manhattan, we have been aware of the effects of "Title 42" this past year. Title 42 is a pandemic-era policy that both the Trump and Biden administrations have used to immediately expel arriving migrants back to Mexico or their countries of origin with the exception of arrivals from countries where the U.S. does not have good diplomatic relations - namely Cuba, Venezuela, Columbia, and Nicaragua.

As a result, these unmoored migrants from four countries make up the very small portion of those allowed to stay in the U.S. and pursue asylum claims. Then, in a most cruel twist, they are bussed to New York City from Texas and Florida so that Manhattan has been disproportionately overwhelmed with migrants arriving-sometimes as many as 3,500 migrants per week. At Seafarers International House we have been able to house some asylees from Venezuela and Columbia. We are grateful for our housekeeper, Damaris, at the Markle Residence (our temporary home). She is originally from Ven-

MISSION
Seafarers International House (SIH) is the Lutheran response to the urgent needs of vulnerable seafarers and immigrants.
SIH offers hospitality, social assistance, and advocacy to a multi-national and multi-faith community in maritime ports on the Eastern Seaboard, Albany and in New York City.

ezuela herself and can assist these new arrivals in their own language and help them to navigate the city. She is a human lighthouse for such a vulnerable population and embodies the Biblical call to be lighthouses in our own contexts and to be lighthouses now.

Thank you for all you do as our financial and spiritual supporters which enables Seafarers International House to be a lighthouse now. 🚧

Marsh Luther Drefke
Pastor and Executive Director



Pastor Marsh (right) received Christmas-at-Sea satchels from church member Jeannine Comito and former SIH Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) intern and now Pastor Zach Dean of Calvary Lutheran Church in Hauppauge, NY. Photo: Selfie by Zach Dean, late September 2022.

2022 Program Impact

19,943 immigrants and seafarers directly benefited from SIH services

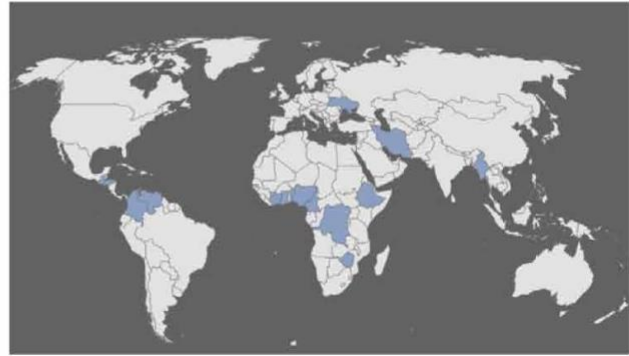
1,764 lodging nights provided to 169 seafarers in Manhattan.

15,135 seafarers were visited and counseled on 1,368 ships, receiving essentials they requested.

1,701 seafarers were transported to a mall or medical facilities.


2,915 seafarers, regardless of faith, received Christmas-at-Sea satchels filled with warm clothing and holiday greetings prepared by volunteers to recognize these essential workers. This is a new record!

23 immigrants received free lodging for a total of 537 nights. They hailed from Benin, Cameroon, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, Myanmar, Nigeria, Saint Lucia, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe (see highlighted countries on the map below).

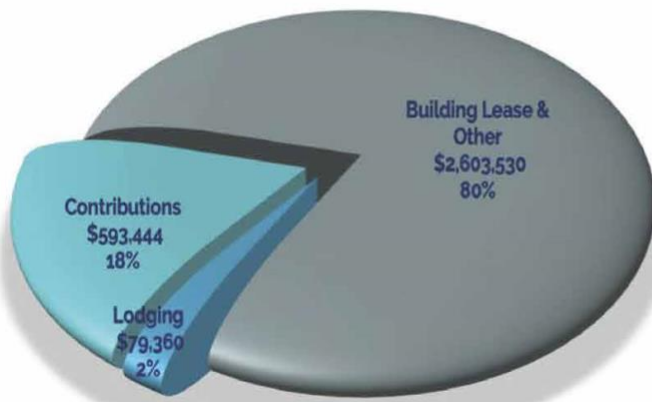


2022 FINANCIAL REPORT

Operating gains in 2022 help replenish our endowment for future emergencies and to build reserves for a new property with mission-based guestrooms and offices. Our partnership with Breaking Ground is a major factor in our financial recovery, providing building lease revenue to support our mission to seafarers and immigrants as well as contributing to reserves for our own future home. Donations are essential as we enter our 150th year of caring for those in need.

Program services accounted for 82% percent of expenses with only 18% spent on support services and fundraising. Net Assets increased from \$7,870,434 in 2021 to \$8,816,744 in 2022. These figures reflect unaudited revenue and expenses and are subject to change once audited. To request the audited 2022 financial statements send an email to henryk@sihnyc.org. 

Operating Revenue 2022 (pre-audit)
\$3,276,334



Operating Expenses 2022 (pre-audit)
\$2,487,067



United Lutheran Seminary Report

United Lutheran Seminary continues to build and sustain an affirming and diverse learning community of faithful, well-educated leaders skilled at guiding grace-filled encounters. Deeply rooted in the history of Lutheranism within Christianity, we witness to and participate in the work of God in the world through spiritual leadership and accompaniment, public advocacy, impactful worship, and care of neighbor.



In three years, we will be observing the bicentennial of our origins when Samuel Simon Schmucker founded the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Gettysburg in part because it's bucolic setting would ensure a place of study and contemplation free from the distractions of the world. Of course, our national narrative put an abrupt end to that concept in 1863, and shortly thereafter C.P. Krauth felt that the center of Lutheran theological learning would be better off in the growing city of Philadelphia. After 154 years and several failed attempts, the two campuses were re-united under the banner of United. This word is a lofty aspirational sentiment, given the fractious world in which we find ourselves.

The church of Christ is struggling to be seen against a backdrop of political drama and escalating tensions over our history, our climate, and our future. Nevertheless, it is a good time to be the church. It is a good time to be United under the banner of God's intended formation for all of us. The seminary has adapted quickly to the world emerging from Covid, providing new technologies and learning platforms that make theological education accessible to people as far away as Palestine, Ghana, and Myanmar. No longer bound by archaic notions of geographical limitations, our two campuses have broken down old barriers and assumptions, creating a new campus that is both geographical and without boundaries, offering our students to gather in person and virtually. Our faculty is working to provide learning opportunities in Guatemala, Germany, Palestine, and India.

In the past year we have dedicated a great deal of time and resources to developing a Strategic Plan for the seminary which gives us a wide-angle view of future aspirations to fulfill the needs of a changing church and world. Thanks to the collaborative efforts of the ELCA Mission Investment Fund and support from your synod, we will continue to offer degree programs at little or no cost to the student, allowing a higher ed. degree without crippling educational loan debt. In addition, our endowment allows us to apply funding to a new and exciting horizon of learning opportunities for rostered and lay folks.

The Strategic Plan recognizes that learning and formation never end. Our faith narrative is never fully formed. Sanctification is a life-long process full of fits and starts, mountaintops and valleys. This is the reason United Lutheran Seminary will continue to focus on building a lifelong community of learning through Kindling Faith, the Center for Sabbath Rest and Formation. Already in its first year of existence, Kindling Faith has created over sixty opportunities for learning across a wide range of topics, demographics, and learning platforms. While much of the programming takes place in a virtual setting, multi-day events take place on both United campuses, offering alums and lay folk the opportunity to spend time in a place apart where they can engage in learning and fellowship with like-minded colleagues and friends. Kindling Faith has a learning opportunity for you—simply go to uls.edu and click on "Learn" to see what we are offering.

Thank you for walking with us on this portion of our common journey. In the year ahead, I hope to see and meet more of you on the territory of your synod, on zoom, or on one of our beautiful historic campuses. Peace be with you.

Rev. Dr. R. Guy Erwin, Seminary President

WOMEN OF THE ELCA

Upstate New York Synod

I am happy to report that 2023 will be a good year for activities after 3 years of inactivity due to COVID.

Conferences have been having fall and spring meetings.

On September 19-21 Sue Nalle, Cindy Rivera, and myself will be attending the Twelfth Triennial Convention in Phoenix, Arizona. This is the business time where officers and boards are elected, budget passed and a summary of what has been happening at the Churchwide organization of Women of the ELCA.

On September 21-24 will be the Gathering. I call this the “Fun” part of the week. There will be lots of speakers, workshops and singing and more singing. Hearing 2500 Lutheran Women sing together is amazing!

The Upstate NY Synod Women of the ELCA will be held on October 6, 7, 8 2023 at Notre Dame Retreat House. The Center was able to stay open after some generous donations. We will have speakers, some business and electing new officers and board and singing. Again singing is what Lutheran Women do amazing well!

Please join us for either or both of the events. Both promise to be very uplifting experiences.

In Christ
Karen Douglass
President