



Upstate New York Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Annual Report to Congregations 2010

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, "Rejoice!"

(Philippians 4:4)



Each day people, congregations and ministries in the Upstate New York Synod are responding to God's call to be resurrection people who pray first, walk together and change lives.

The Bishop's office, Synod Council, teams and task forces are striving to align our ministry more fully with our stated mission. We are deeply grateful to the Conference Deans for stepping up as the "Call your Dean" emphasis has allowed more congregational needs to be handled locally. Three conference visits provided significant time with lay and rostered leaders. Four more are scheduled for January through May. Pastor Amy Walter-Peterson, Director for Evangelical Mission, will follow up on these visits with a focus on growing leaders and developing creative partnerships. We continue to walk together with ecumenical partners and are considering ways to strengthen ministry across denominations. We believe that focusing on mission will help us to meet the financial challenges we face.

Congregations are also living through change. Almost 25% of our congregations experienced some change in pastoral leadership in 2010. Some have merged or clustered in new ways, a few have moved toward closing. Four congregations and one ministry voted to leave the ELCA following the churchwide assembly decisions. We acknowledge and grieve the losses, even as we trust in God's promise to do new things.

It's impossible to tell all the stories or relay all the facts, but we hope that those included in this report bear witness to the good news that remains the same throughout the ages – Christ has died. Christ is Risen. Christ will come again.

Grace and peace,

Marie C. Jerge

Bishop Marie C. Jerge



Search for us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube where we maintain a presence. Last year 187 people viewed our synod assembly via webcasts.

Resurrection People

What do you do when your church building is deemed unsafe? St. John's, West Seneca held a service of farewell, gave thanks for the ministry the building had supported and began a process to build a new facility to serve the congregation of tomorrow.

View pictures of the demolition and follow St. John's story at www.stjohnsws.org as they continue their journey as resurrection people.



Resurrection people who pray first, walk together and change lives

St. John's stopped worshipping in their sanctuary in January 2009. The congregation looked at a number of options, including refortifying the existing structure. In May 2009 after considerable discernment the congregation voted to tear down and build new. St. John's has faced the death of the old to make room for something new that God is building through them and through this project. The dedication of the new building is scheduled for December 2011!

Who Pray First

In 2010 three new pastors were ordained and called to leadership in Upstate New York Synod congregations. In addition to candidates who move through the candidacy process in traditional ways, we continue to seek alternate ways to train pastoral leaders.

St. Andrew, South Glens Falls is one example. Joyce Fiore now serves as their pastoral leader. Joyce was a nurse before she entered the candidacy process. She was commissioned as an Associate in Ministry in 2007. While serving the Southern Columbia County parish along with Pastor Mark Frickey, she heard the call to ordained ministry. With the support of the Upstate New York Candidacy Committee she applied for the TEEM (Theological

Education for Emerging Ministries) program.

Joyce is completing the requirements for ordination through TEEM while she serves at St. Andrew's.



Joyce Fiore, AIM visits a homebound member.

Walk Together

In July, 14 people from Upstate New York journeyed to Africa to participate in an all-church revival sponsored by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe. Four of the group traveled to Zambia to witness Bishop Jerge induct Pastor Alfred Chana as Senior Pastor of the Evangelical

Walking with new friends in Zimbabwe.



Lutheran Church in Zambia. The physical presence of these travelers as our representatives embodies what it means to walk together with our brothers and sisters around the world.

The travelers came home with new friends, new stories and new insights to share. Follow their stories at www.upstatenysynod.org.

And Change Lives

Talk to young people who have attended camp or been touched by campus ministry and you will hear the story of changed lives and nurtured faith. Through outdoor ministries like Lake Chautauqua Lutheran Center and Vanderkamp Center and at Lutheran colleges and campus ministries young people become bold witnesses to their faith in Jesus Christ. To provide additional funding for these ministries the Synod Council has endorsed the Feed the Roots of Leadership Capital Campaign. Growing leaders for the future of the church is one of the most tangible ways that God uses us to change the lives of young people touched

by these ministries. These young leaders also change us as they grow to take on active leadership in the church.



Feed the Roots of Leadership will begin inviting congregations and individuals to make commitments in 2011 to support important, life-changing ministry in our synod.



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