Churchwide Assembly

The Triennial Churchwide Assembly will take place August 4-10 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As in the past there will be a lot of business to tend to, perhaps most importantly electing a Presiding Bishop. Bishop Elizabeth Eaton has stated that she is willing to stand for a second term and there will be others who will allow their names to go forward as well.

Also at the gathering we’ll be discussing church business covering everything from Constitutional updates to adopting the Women and Justice Social Statement and everything in between. Organizations will have space to show and sell their goods including 1517 Media, C.M. Almy and many others.

Representing this synod are the following folks elected at the June 2018 Synod Assembly:

Mr. Benjamin Wendel, Mr. Gregory May, Ms. Judith Mica Guerin, Ms. Laura Duchene, Ms. Marcia Brown, Rev. Deb Johnson, Rev. Hannah Benedict, Rev. Jeff Silvernail, Rev. Jeniffer Tillman, Rev. John Macholz/Bishop, Rev. Lori Kochanski, Mr. Saah Nue Quigee, Mr. Thomas Madden/VP. This group will gather prior to Churchwide Assembly for a day to review expectations, familiarize ourselves with the business to be conducted and all the other details involved in attending Churchwide Assembly.

Synod Strategic Plan: Faith Alive!

Faith Alive! Living as Grounded, Growing, Giving and Graced people in the world was rolled out at Synod Assembly. This plan is the fruit of conversations the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission had across the synod and nearly a year of work by the Synod Council. The result is a five year plan to help our synod grow deeper in relationship with Jesus, more confident in sharing God’s love, forgiveness and life with others, and embrace our invitation to be generous people, all for the sake of the world.

This first year has focused on being grounded in Christ Jesus. Playshops focused on Biblical storytelling and getting to know the Biblical narrative by heart have been held across the synod, with one more planned in the new year. Each month bulletin inserts have been offered that invite users to try out faith practices and share the story of someone in our synod.

At Synod Assembly we’ll make the shift to year two and growing in our witness. Our evangelism and discipling year will feature opportunities to practice sharing Jesus, a “Synod Reads” book and study and more. You can find resources and more information on the Faith Alive! page of the synod website.

Bishop’s Convocation: March 16, 2019

The 2019 Bishop’s Convocation will be led by Rachel Alley, Program Director for Youth Ministry and Savanna Sullivan, Program Director for Young Adult Ministry. These Churchwide leaders will be with us to support our focus on Youth and Young Adult Ministry.

Rachel and Savanna will spend the day helping us discover what is taking place across the church, where trends are leading us, how the larger church might be helpful and offer their insights and wisdom. Please note that this is also one of the areas we are working on with Churchwide as part of our Partnered Synod Project journey. All are welcome to attend this event, especially youth and young adults.

Five candidates were approved for ordination at the Candidacy Retreat on December 7-8.
Congratulations to Eric Madsen, James Vitale, Ashlin Marchese, Samantha White and Adam Arends.
Thank You!
From Victoria Flood and Nick Kiger, the Director and Associate Director of Mission Advancement in the ELCA

In this season of gratitude and anticipation, we are grateful for you! To our pastors, deacons and congregational leaders, thank you for teaching others what it means to live generously. To our synod and congregational administrators, thank you for your amazing support and behind-the-scenes work to ensure ministry happens. Thank you to everyone for all you do to spread Christ’s love to others, including the ways you highlight the need for Mission Support. In the final month of 2018, take a moment to reflect on the fruits of your efforts. During Advent, we joyfully await the birth of Christ. And, as Bishop Eaton reminds us in her Christmas message, we are on a “joyful journey” as individuals and as the church. May we look back on our ministry together in 2018 and know we’ve helped show the peace, love and joy of Christ to our neighbors, far and wide. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

“And who will join this standing up and the ones who stood without sweet company will sing and sing back into the mountains and if necessary even under the sea we are the ones we have been waiting for”
(From “Poem for South African Women” by June Jordan)

This excerpt from the poem by June Jordan sums up the feeling at the ELCA Youth Leadership Summit. Youth from across the ELCA gathered at Camp Carol Joy Holling, Nebraska, to speak and learn and listen and plan how to be the “ones we have been waiting for” as we live into God’s abundant promises for all creation. Latrell Huffman (Atonement, Syracuse) and Sydney Higgins (Bethlehem, Fairport) attended along with me as our Synod representatives.

The focus at the event was on the advocacy work of the ELCA. Some areas of interest included: creation care, addressing world hunger issues, confronting racism and sexism. The biblical theme was based on Philippians 2:1-5.

The youth and adult from each Synod also spent time discussing how we can further this kind of work in our individual synods. When we met in our Synod group we discussed the need for basic foundation work in the area of learning how to even begin to talk with one another so that we can address these issues. We also noticed how it is not always big things that can fight injustice. We made a commitment to go home, notice places we need to do God’s work of justice and do small things from wherever you are. We hope that if everyone does small things they will add up to a big thing.

Bishop Macholz has committed to work with these young people, and others, in finding ways to engage these topics and conversation in more formal ways throughout our Synod. I, too, remain committed to supporting ongoing efforts of faith formation and justice.

Seminary Debt Reduction

The Bishop’s Appeal for 2017 and 2018 was to create a fund from which pastors could apply and receive a grant to help offset their student loan debts. We released the application for the first time this year and all rostered pastors and rostered deacons were encouraged apply. While we only received four forms in 2018, I am delighted to tell you that all four of the individuals received the total maximum amount given, $500. Each of the applicants indicated that it would be a huge help were they to receive this gift. Letters will go out along with checks before this year is out.

2019 IRS Mileage Rates:
58 cents per mile for business use
20 cents per mile for medical or moving purposes
14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations

Rev. Lori Kochanski
Assistant to the Bishop
for Faith Formation
Synod Ministerium 2018

By Kathy Neugent, Executive Assistant to the Bishop

Once again, Notre Dame Retreat House in Canandaigua hosted our annual event.

The Rev. Dr. Angela Zimmann, Professor of Homiletics and Vice-President for Advancement at United Lutheran Seminary, Gettysburg, PA led the event. Her presentation entitled “Preaching Across the Divide: Wrestling with Difficult Topics,” made use of personal and classroom experiences to lead us in the process of developing a homiletical approach on controversial or divisive issues.

Workshops were led by Rev. Lori Kochanski, Assistant to the Bishop for Faith Formation; Rev. Norma Malfatti, Director for Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop; Rev. Dana Smith, Senior Pastor at Atonement, Syracuse and Rev. Beth DuBois, Developer of Appleseed Community at Atonement, Syracuse on “Old Ideas in a New Time” “Helping Your Folks Tell Their Faith Story”, and the “Poor People’s Campaign,” respectively.

Representatives from the Mission Investment Fund and Portico health services joined us to share goods and services.

Fellowship and free time including tours, golf, hiking and other options were enjoyed by all in attendance.

Synod Ministerium 2019

Synod Ministerium will be held September 16-18, 2019 at Notre Dame Retreat Center in Canandaigua, NY. It is an opportunity for rostered leaders to gather and reflect on a specific topic with a specific presenter. The time together also allows for workshops, worship, evening fellowship and outdoor activities for some. Mark your calendars now and plan on joining with colleagues across this synod.

Obtain information about the 2019 Churchwide Assembly on-line at https://search.elca.org/Pages/Results.aspx?k=churchwide+assembly+2019

Stay connected with your synod on-line. Visit upstateny synod.org. While there, sign up for the Upstate Update and also receive the Midweek Musings.

Bishop’s 2018 Golf Tournament

By Karen Eadon, Synod Bookkeeper

The fourth annual Bishop John Macholz Golf Outing was held on Monday, August 20th at Shadow Lake Golf and Racquet Club in Penfield. With 49 golfers, more than 50 lawn sign sponsors and businesses and 70 diners, we raised $7,583.39 for the Bishop’s Appeal to support Youth and Young Adult Ministry in our Synod.

Prizes were awarded to the lowest scoring teams, longest drive, closest to the pin - for men and women! We raised $585.00 in our 50/50 raffle and $720.00 from our wine pull, $915.00 in auction items and $1,700.00 in sponsorships.

A date has not yet been identified for our 2019 tournament yet, but please look for an announcement coming soon. Thanks to all of this year’s participants and volunteers!

Welcome St. John’s, St. Paul’s and Pastor Daniel Buringrud

by Rev. Dan Rumfelt

Two former Lutheran Church Missouri Synod congregations on the territory of the Southwestern Conference voted in 2018 to enter the ELCA and spent much of the year working through the process of adopting ELCA Congregational Constitutions. St. John’s, Allegany, began as a German Lutheran church in 1856 and continues to faithfully serve its village community. St. Paul’s, Ellicottville, has gone through several growth phases since its founding in 1923 and since 2008 has been housed in a modern church building right at home in its resort community. The Rev. Daniel Buringrud, St. Paul’s, also worked through the candidacy process to transfer into the ELCA. The congregations and Pastor Buringrud have long been deeply ecumenical and are welcome additions to the conference, synod and ELCA. They will be received at the 2019 Synod Assembly.
Youth and Young Adult Ministry by Bishop John S. Macholz

For the current Bishop’s Appeal I chose to focus on Youth and Young Adult Ministry, to find ways to help support, encourage and strengthen what presently exists as well as to dream about new ways that our synod’s ministry might assist in this most important ministry. The proceeds from the 2018 golf tournament, approximately $7,500, will help financially support this work. I am hopeful that we can make headway in this arena and build and grow these opportunities.

So, in the best Lutheran sense of the process the question arises: “What does this mean?” What it means is that we will be working both within the synod and beyond to ask questions, have conversations and move forward. I have begun and will continue to have conversations with youth leaders across this synod. It is my hope that as we move forward we will grow in our understanding and ministry with youth and young adults, being open to learning from them and even more importantly, listening to them, to see how together we might be responsive and drive these ministries forward. I invite you to the journey and, if you are so inclined, I invite you to consider a contribution to the appeal and become a part of this process. We are the church together.

2019 Synod Assembly Planning

By Michelle Josephson
Assistant to the Bishop for Operations

The planning for our 2019 Synod Assembly has already begun! This year’s theme is focused on Growing in Our Witness, the second of the Synod’s Faith Alive! Strategic plan: Grounded in Christ Jesus, Growing in Our Witness, Giving of Our Bounty and Graced for the World! We are pleased to announce that we will once again hold Assembly at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center with accommodations being provided by the newly renovated Hyatt. The change to the Hyatt was well-received last year with all of the updates and upgraded amenities providing an extra bit of pampering for guests. Another well-received addition that will continue for 2019 is the use of electronic voting. This newly included technology allowed us to streamline the voting process, providing more time for other synod business, worship and fellowship. Hard at work, our Synod Assembly planning team is taking advantage of project management software and phone conferencing to limit the amount of travel time for those who are able to serve on the team, while still keeping us all on the same page as we move forward in planning another wonderful synod-wide Assembly.

Annual Report Covers

Annual report covers now available! Congregations can both file their important annual meeting documents and showcase the work of this church by using the 2018 ELCA annual report covers. This colorful wrap-around sheet provides:
- A message from ELCA Presiding Bishop,
- Devotional materials to begin your annual meeting, including a hymn and responsive prayer,
- Explanations of ELCA churchwide ministries funded by Mission Support,
- A scored and offset spine for ease in inserting and stapling annual report materials.

This cover can be used alone or paired with Stories of Faith in Action. Both resources are free—all you cover is shipping. To order copies for your congregational meeting go to http://resources.elca.org/Stewardship-2018_Annual_Report_Cover.html. Or if you’d prefer to print covers on your own, download the spreads or single pages here: https://elca.org/Resources/Stewardship. The digital version of Stories of Faith in Action can be found here: https://www.elca.org/SOFIA.

SAVE THE DATE!

The Annual
Upstate New York
Synod Assembly

May 30-June 1, 2019

Joseph A. Floreano
Rochester Riverside Convention Center

Our host hotel for 2019 is
The Hyatt Hotel
125 E. Main St. in Rochester

This year our focus is on:
Growing in Our Witness

Theme: “You will be my Witness”
Theme Scripture: Matthew 28: 19-20