A REPORT FROM THE BISHOP’S OFFICE
Conference Assembly - Fall 2018
Grounded, Growing, Giving and Graced

Youth and Young Adult Ministry
By Bishop John S. Macholz
For our 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 recent golf tournament, approximately $7,500, will begin to 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 this fall. At the Bishop’s Convocation on March 16th at Atonement in Syracuse, Rachel Alley, Program Director for Youth Ministry and Savanna Sullivan, Program Director for Young Adult Ministry will be with us as part of this conversation. I will be reaching out to others beyond the church as well to discover and learn from their experiences and journeys.

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.

Stay connected with your synod at our new website. While you’re there sign up for the Upstate Update at the bottom of our home page.

Women and Justice Social Statement Hearing Report
By Rev. Lori Kochanski, Assistant to the Bishop for Faith Formation
In the Fall of 2018 the ELCA of the Social Statement on Women and Justice. This draft is intended for public’s conversation and comment by members of the ELCA. Formal feedback is sent to the task force for work on the final draft. This has happened in different forms throughout the year.

Every Synod is asked to host a hearing where anyone can share specific suggestions and feedback with the representatives of the task force work. This forum is not intended to be a place of debate, rather it is a place to share constructive language and questions that will enhance the work of the task force presented in the draft statement.

The Upstate New York hearing was hosted by St. John, Liverpool. The bishop opened the morning with prayer. Brad Wendel, a member of St. Luke, Ithaca, and Rev. Lori Kochanski (both members of the task force) conducted the hearing. A formal report was submitted to the ELCA office that is leading the work of the social statement.

A Fourth Successful Bishop’s Golf Tournament By Karen Eadon
was held on Monday, August 20 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 just over $7,700.00 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 in our 50/50 raffle and $720.00 from our wine pull.

A date has not yet been identified for our 2019 tournament yet, but please look for an announcement soon. Thanks to all of this year’s participants and volunteers! Check out this year’s pictures on Golf Tournament Pictures or on the Synod’s SmugMug.com account.
“Faith Alive!” By Rev. Lori Kochanski, Assistant to the Bishop for Faith Formation

“Faith Alive!” Grounded in Christ Jesus

“Faith Alive!” Is the 5 year strategic plan for the Upstate New York Synod. The plan was introduced at the Synod Assembly and is being overseen by the Synod Council.

In order to engage others in the development of the plan, two play-shops were held in July. The gatherings (in Rochester and Amsterdam) provided space and time to learn scripture by heart, get to know others and have conversation about effective ways to implement any future gatherings around the topic of the strategic plan.

The working group is currently comprised of Pastors Norma Malfatti, Lori Kochanski, Debi Turley and Bishop Macholz.

The following has been developed as a working plan for the coming year:

Strategic Plan Calendar and Components for Year One, September 2018-June 2019

Ongoing
— Bulletin Inserts
In collaboration with many, this bulletin insert will be available monthly. This is a way to ground us in scripture and practice. In addition, it will encourage learning stories—our own and God’s— for empowerment in daily life.
— Presence in Communication (upstate update, social media, website)
We will be working with someone to be intentional about how we use communication even more effectively as a vehicle for mission and ministry sharing
— Labyrinth Construction for Use Throughout the Synod
Pastors Lori Kochanski and Tara Eastman are working on this labyrinth that’s constructed on canvas and very portable.

Fall
— Storytelling Event
This event for lay and rostered folks will happen in three locations within the synod. The goal is to encourage storytelling and sharing as grounding in faith.
— Emphasis at Fall Assemblies
As we participate in Fall assemblies we will lift up the efforts of the leaders in the synod around this work in how to ground ourselves in Christ through knowing the Biblical stories and sharing in our own witness & work.

Spring
— Curricula Developed
We hope to work on some specific curriculum that will help folks continue to be part of living faith communities.
— Additional Media Developed (this may include both video and applications to be used on phones)
Video content will be developed. We are also dreaming about how a phone app might be able to give people opportunities to share faith in new ways. Stay tuned.

New Partnership with Churchwide
By Rev. Norma Malfatti, Director for Evangelical Mission/Assistant to the Bishop

Earlier this year Upstate NY was invited to participate in the Partner Synod Project (PSP) along with 4 other synods (North Carolina, Indiana-Kentucky, Southwest Washington, Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana). We said YES! This is an experiment to see how we, as the church, might be more effective by creating an even more connected and invested relationship between the Churchwide organization and synods. Looking at the trends in Upstate New York and the most common feedback synod leadership has received, Bishop Macholz identified four areas to begin focusing this new partnership: youth and young adult ministry (Rachel Ally and Savanah Sullivan, Program Directors for youth and young adult ministry respectively, will be leading the annual Bishop’s Convocation on March 16th in Syracuse); stewardship and mission support; lay leadership development; and communication. While the Bishop and DEM Norma Malfatti have met virtually with Churchwide staff virtually to begin this partnership, they are headed to Chicago at the end of November to meet with Churchwide staff and the bishops and DEMs of the other four synods to further develop this partnership. If you have questions, wonderings or ideas please send them to Bishop Macholz and/or Rev. Malfatti so they, and you, can be a part of the conversation.

In the meantime, look to see some shifts in the synod’s communication. As of the writing of this report, synod staff is preparing to meet with Jocelyn Fuller, Director for Strategic Communication in Mission Advance, for a communication audit and begin bringing to life the dream of creating short videos that tell the story of who we are, what we do as a synod and what congregations in our synod are up to in their communities.