



Faithful and effective: Equipping leaders for ministry

One of the first actions Jesus took when he went public with his ministry was to call disciples. He gathered around himself students he would form as leaders to share in furthering God's mission for the sake of the world. Yes, developing leaders was a central part of Jesus' ministry! From the first disciples—who became apostles, sent to teach, preach, and lead—we remember saints throughout the ages who transformed lives as they led.

We also celebrate the faith leaders in our own lives who have breathed life into our own faith formation. How effective and faithful can we be in mission without effective and faithful leaders? Indeed, forming leaders is a basic building block for our work with God. That's why our synod is doing many things to recruit and support pastors and lay leaders to carry out our strategic plan for mission, "equipping the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ." (Ephesians 4:12)

Growing leaders for rostered public ministries

Finding and training leaders—also known as the candidacy process—is a churchwide initiative that we foster locally on behalf of the whole church. Our ELCA recognizes the crucial importance of having good leaders for mission.

Our synodically rostered deacons go through a similar process of theological education, psychological assessment, supervised internship, and written evaluations. Visit www.mnys.org/ministries2/diaconate to learn more.

Resources for lifelong learning—God isn't finished with us yet!

In a rapidly changing church and world, leadership formation never ends. So to help rostered leaders in this lifelong journey, our synod's Leadership Working Group of the Gathered Committee offers a planning tool based on "Wholeness Wheel" categories—spiritual, vocational, intellectual, social, emotional, physical and financial well-being—to strengthen wholeness for effective and faithful



PHOTO BY BOB WILLIAMS



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT Grants in Action

"One of the seminarians from our parish shared with me that he had taken a wonderful and practical class on stewardship at Philadelphia Seminary. It was led by former seminary president Rev. Dr. Philip Krey. This got me to thinking that my congregation, as well as others, could benefit from a practical seminar on stewardship. By making a generous grant, the Metro New York Synod's leadership development program provided the opportunity for Ascension, Deer Park to host a full-day seminar with Dr. Krey. Among other things, it will provide ideas for fall stewardship planning, planned giving, a capital gifts campaign, and how to encourage tithing."

—Pastor John Krahn

Practical Stewardship Seminar

Saturday, April 25, 9am-4pm, at Ascension, Deer Park

www.mnys.org/events/practicalstewardship



Photo: Setting apart of synodically rostered deacons, May 2014

to \$3,000. Groups can apply for up to \$7,500 to organize special events which can be open to our whole synod. Visit www.mnys.org/vocation__formation/leadership_development.

If you're a pastor or seminarian who wants to travel elsewhere for a continuing education experience, our synod still offers Trexler study and travel grants. (www.mnys.org/vocation__formation/trexlergrants)

If you're a candidate for rostered ministry attending a Lutheran seminary, you can apply for grants offered by our synod every year through the ELCA Fund for Leaders program.

And through the generous legacy of the late Pastor John Huneke, our synod has special funds available through Fund for Leaders for students attending the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia.

leadership. Download it at www.mnys.org/assets/1/7/GuidetoPlanningLifelongLearning.pdf.

Another great resource is an ecumenical website, Faith and Wisdom (www.faithandwisdom.org). Type in topics of interest to be directed through programs throughout the country.

Supporting leaders—putting our money where our mouth is!

Grassroots leaders, here's your chance to take a lead in planning for lifelong learning. Rather than a top-down approach of someone saying "here's what you need to learn," the synod's Leadership Development Grant program encourages you to discern needs and passions in your context. What do you want to learn more about, for effective and faithful mission?

Up to \$50,000 a year is available to make grants for individuals and groups of rostered leaders to attend or plan continuing education events. Individuals can apply for up

Supporting leaders via continuing education

Toward growing more deeply in faith—a foundation for effective leadership formation—our synodical strategic plan features "Five Years of God's Creative Grace," a multi-year emphasis on each of the means of grace emphasized by Martin Luther: Mutual Conversation and Consolation, Confession and Forgiveness, Preaching, Baptism, and Eucharist (www.mnys.org/growinginfaith). Each year, continuing education events introduce leaders to these themes and the practices related to them. Also, synodical retreats—for deans, deacons, diakonia students, candidates, clergy, Synod Council, and staff—will be occasions to both learn more about and to experience the various ways God communicates the gospel to us.



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GRANTS IN ACTION

I want to know Christ—and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings...Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

"Theological Continuing Education at Koinonia comes from this desire—to press on in knowing Christ and to press on in following Christ in ministry. We know that scriptural and theological training remain our best tools, but that they need continual sharpening. We kept looking for continuing education that was not only going to say it was theological, but would actually use Scripture and our theological heritage to make ministry better. We kept looking until we decided that we could apply for Leadership Development Grants and do continuing ed right. We hope that many other pastors share the desire to press on in our calling. Maybe you can join us."

—Pastors John Flack and Stephanie Kershner

Theological Continuing Education at Koinonia
April 27-30, at Koinonia • www.tcek.org



LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT GRANTS IN ACTION

"Annually, the Hudson Conference strives to offer an educational event. The opportunity to fund this event through the Leadership Grant application process was a great blessing, making possible what could not have done financially as a conference. The grant funds three presentations by Dr. Timothy Wengert and travel costs. Gathering both clergy and laity for worship and dialogue that is synodwide in scope, this unique opportunity invites us to explore the roots and practical applications of Luther's reforming vision of 'mutual conversation and consolation.' This event promises to offer a sharp contrast to today's social climate, so often lacking in calm, constructive, respectful civil discourse around issues and concerns that affect us all."

—Pastor Dan Ward

Living Like Abraham and Sarah: Luther's Insights into Mutual Conversation and Consolation
Saturday, April 11, at St. John's, Poughkeepsie
www.mnys.org/events/wengert

Beyond one size fits all: New pathways in candidacy and theological education

The candidacy process for ELCA rostered leadership is undergoing significant change. Missionary leadership is now becoming the lens through which we will discern with those who feel called to rostered public ministry in our church. In other words, being a mission developer or redeveloper—once a specialized ministry—is now becoming the norm for all people being trained for public ministry in our church.

Seminary education is also changing. Theological curricula are evolving to better educate and form leaders for mission. Emerging also are new formats for theological education, combining classroom and online formats for learning along with supervised ministries in congregations and other settings.

There is now much more flexibility in education for ministry too. Gone are the days of cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all approaches to theological education! Each candidate for public ministry now is received according to his or her unique needs, circumstances, gifts, and opportunities. And in the candidacy process, all those who share responsibility for leadership formation—seminary and candidacy representatives along with the candidate—talk together in a conference call to map out a specialized plan with timelines for their education and formation process. Candidates in



Clergy surround Pastor Chryll Crews at her ordination

our care will also be assigned relators on the Candidacy Committee who will support our students throughout their formation.

In these ways, we seek to be more effective in God's work of raising up new missionary leaders in our church for the sake of the world.

Recruiting leaders—help us out; be a scout!

Recruiting leaders is something we could do better. Rather than rather passively receiving those who show interest, we want to be more intentional; for example, by using new nominations forms and processes we've developed for prospective church leaders. The Candidacy Committee is also looking to proactively seek prospective rostered leaders, perhaps through initiatives such as the popular Project Connect young adult leadership program.

But remember: leaders are primarily born from local congregations and ministries, when someone lifts up their

potential! Be on the lookout for gifted, faith-filled persons whom God might raise up as leaders for mission. We are here to help you in this vocational discernment for all baptized children of God, as we ask ourselves, "What would God have me do to share in God's mission for the sake of the world?"

Recruiting leaders when they are young

Our synod also hopes to find young leaders through ministries we support and are in conversation with:

- Lutheran Youth Organization
- Pincrest Lutheran Leadership Ministries
- Lutheran Ministries in Higher Education and its new initiative, The Vine NYC
- Student Christian Center at SUNY New Paltz
- Lutheran schools and early learning centers through Lutheran Schools Association

We're here to help

Do you have questions about becoming a leader for the church in mission? Or want help in your plans for recruiting, equipping or supporting leaders? Are you a rostered leader who would like a sounding board for your lifelong learning plans? Contact Pastor Jonathan Linman, Assistant to the Bishop for Faith and Leadership Formation at jlinman@mnys.org or 212-870-2374.

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Reclaiming our call as servant leaders



We in the church have used the phrase “servant-leadership” so often that it seems to have lost its impact. So let’s reclaim it. Let’s look to Jesus as a model for the kind of leader I want to be and want you to be.

I’m writing at the beginning of Lent, while the story of our Lord’s temptation is fresh in my mind and heart. That story shows us some of the great temptations to leaders, like false pride and fear. These things make it easy to rely on ourselves and block God. Instead, Jesus points to God as the focus of our worship, the source of our security and self-worth, and the “audience” of our lives and our service.

Even if you do not view yourself as a “leader,” God as our focus is essential for every believer’s life. You interact with others, you constantly make choices and decisions. With God as our focus and guide, we can be at our best and stay the course. (“Trust in the Lord and do not rely on your own insight...” Proverbs 3:5-8). This applies to every one of us, in all of our lives, and all of our decision-making.

I’m assuming that you who are reading this are Christian, and as a Christians, are seeking to keep Jesus as the central focus of your life. I’m assuming that we want to stop blocking God in our lives, and that all of us want to follow Jesus as our true leader.

Yet there are many things that prevent this following from truly happening. Chief among them are pride and fear, the two great temptations and distractions for servant leaders. They separate us from God. They keep us distant from other people. They even prevent us from truly knowing ourselves. Giving in to pride and fear prevents leadership from happening because they are breeding grounds for cloudy thinking and misdirected actions. Pride and fear always generate unhealthy judgments because they lead us to base our own lives on the successes or failures of others.

Pride and fear always distort the truth into either a false sense of security or a lack of confidence and diminished self-worth.

Whenever anything becomes more important to you than God, you are in effect bowing to it, adoring it, giving yourself to it. In short, you worship that thing. It may be an object, such as money, a house, a business, or even a new job. It may be a desire for power, recognition, or even appreciation. It may be a habit, an obsession, or an addiction. The story of the temptation, among many things, reminds me that I have to choose what is most important to me: that thing, or a right relationship with God.

**Pride and fear separate us
from God, keep us distant
from other people, and
prevent leadership.**

We are called to worship God above all, and to rely on God as the source of everything including our own self-esteem and security. Our Lord Jesus is the supreme example of this kind of servant-leadership.

Leadership begins with us on our knees before the God of all creation. In that place, pride and fear disappear and we realize again and again that we are called to serve. Then we can be true leaders.

✦ **THE REV. DR. ROBERT ALAN RIMBO** is bishop of the Metropolitan New York Synod.