

STRATEGIC PLAN REPORTS



ANTI-RACISM COMMITTEE

The Rev. Marcia Parkinson-Harrison &
The Rev. Becca Seely, *co-chairs*

We work proactively to help transform our church, and make it more welcoming and inclusive for all people, especially those who have historically been made to feel unwelcome, or are disenfranchised or underrepresented.



COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Randy Subramany, Marianne Tomecek, Joel Bumol, Ingrid Compton, Marva Jenkins

We seek to unify our synod in the wholeness of Christ by dismantling the walls of racism. We are all called to this mission together.

OUR WORK & MISSION

During the 2018 program year, the Anti-Racism Committee was very busy. In the summer, the Anti-Racism Committee hosted a training in Spanish and English at Sion Iglesia Luterana in Manhattan, as well as a two-day workshop focusing on internalized racism at the Urban Leaders Institute. In the fall, the committee worked with the Growing in Faith Diakonia program, to host a training for Diakonia program graduates. These trainings were led by trainers from Cross Roads.

The Equipping Leaders Subcommittee began producing discussion guide resources for congregational use, which are being shared more widely at this Synod Assembly for use across our synod. Please stop by the Anti-Racism Display Table for more information. The Anti-Racism Committee has also been working with Deacon Margy Schmitt-Ajer to identify interventions in the synod's call process systems that will help increase calls and reduce wait-time for candidates of color.

We believe that every human being of every color and background is claimed by God in Christ, that we are gathered together into communities that God is drawing together into repaired relationship in spite of the sin of racism, and that we are sent forth into this world to actively repent of racism by dismantling the systems that perpetuate it. We work proactively to help transform our church and make it more welcoming and inclusive for all people, especially those who have historically been made to feel unwelcome, or are disenfranchised or underrepresented.

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

While the connection between anti-racism work and the goals of confronting racism, inclusion, and working on immigration justice are fairly obvious, we also believe that no congregation can truly be vibrant unless it is engaging fully in the work of repenting from racism and opening itself to being liberated and transformed for the sake of a world that needs transformation and liberation. We believe that our work to change systemic racism in the synod and our efforts to equip leaders across the synod to make grassroots change, will result in more vibrant congregations that are more fully rooted in their communities in the months and years to come





GET INVOLVED

Congregations can use the resources we provide to conduct adult forums, workshops, and discussions in their congregations about racism and related topics. **This year, we are challenging all congregations to participate in one or more intentional studies or conversations around anti-racism topics.** During the 2019 Synod Assembly, please visit our display table or attend our forum to learn more about this challenge!

We encourage folks passionate about combatting racism to contact us about doing more intensive anti-racism training and supporting the work of our committee.

The Synod continues to offer anti-racism workshops, which are required of all rostered and lay leaders in the Synod. If you haven't already taken one, please sign up as soon as possible for one of these valuable workshops. More information is available on our website.



CARE FOR CREATION

Racism and care for creation intersect in many places. In a world wherein the marginalized bear the lion's share of the impact of environmental degradation, we believe it is the church's role to speak out and act for climate justice, for immigrants and refugees, for people of color, for all those whose communities are disproportionately polluted, and for all those whose systems of racism and economic injustice have put them at an increased risk in our current environmental crisis.



CLAIMED COMMITTEE

The Rev. Mark Erson, *chair*

OUR MISSION: THROUGH COMMUNICATION, WE ARE THE ULTIMATE EVANGELISTS

Since the adoption of the Strategic Plan, the Claimed Committee, which continually seeks the help of the Holy Spirit, has been investing its attention on the key concepts of: COMMUNICATION, CONNECTION, and COMMITMENT. Over the years of visioning and programing, these words have guided the committee's focus in a variety of ways through a plethora of endeavors.

OUR WORK: COMMUNICATION. CONNECTION. COMMITMENT.

Last year, the committee decided to focus its attention on the topic of First Third of Life Ministry (ages 1 – 30). In this time, we have learned there is much that is going on in the synod. What the committee is seeking to do is CONNECT stakeholders who share common missions. The committee also identified a need to COMMUNICATE more clearly what is available to people and congregations of the synod, both for youth and young adult ministries. Deacon Margy Schmitt Ajer has been leading this effort. As we begin a new year, the committee will be making funding available for building resources and creating grassroots efforts to establish networks and collaborations, all in the name of serving and building up this valued group of God's people.

A new grant from the ELCA, secured with the help of the Rev. Becca Seeley (Executive Director of Lutheran Ministries in Higher Education) at the end of last year, has provided our synod with the opportunity to call a part-time Young Adult Network Coordinator. As the new year begins, the search to fill this position continues.

The synod continues to enhance its COMMUNICATION through the leadership and creativity of Roberto Lara. In addition to watching the ongoing communiques, the regular e-letter, and the newly enhanced website, watch for apps to be launched that will engage children through the instruments of modern media that are available to us.

As we begin the second 500 years of Reformation legacy, the Rev. Dr. Jonathan Linman has continued to guide the synod's exploration of the Means of Grace, central to Lutheran theology. Each year

and through each focus, this emphasis has sought to increase and strengthen the COMMITMENT of all our people to the God who feeds us freely through the grace made known in Christ, and that continues to flow through the work of the Holy Spirit. 2018's emphasis was on Preaching and Proclamation. Through a variety of retreats, study days, Bible Studies and more, both lay members and clergy were engaged and challenged to embrace our participation in this means of grace.

The Claimed Committee continues to bring a focus to members and diversity. Please consider submitting an application to join our efforts to COMMUNICATE, CONNECT, and build COMMITMENT, in light of the good news that is ours in Jesus Christ.

“Jesus was the ultimate communicator, but He didn’t just talk or listen to people. He connected with people and used many more tools than just words. The primal intent of communication for Jesus was connection. In his actions and in his guidance, He was trying to transform people, not simply give them information.”

Roberto Lara



GATHERED COMMITTEE

Hazel Goldstein, *chair*

OUR MISSION

The objective of the Gathered Strategy is to ensure that Word and Sacrament ministry is provided in the Metro NY Synod.

OUR WORK

The committee has had another busy year. It oversees a number of grant opportunities:

The Capital Improvement Grant helps congregations keep their facilities in working order, upgrades and improves existing facilities, and makes their facilities a safe place for the congregation. This is a matching grant and must be applied for on an annual basis.

The Building for Mission Grant assists congregations in a large-scale setting that will aid in developing their mission. This grant has started slowly but currently has two congregations involved in the process.

The Texler Student and Travel Grant continues to involve numerous rostered leaders every year.

The Sowers Grant remains available for individuals and congregations who think “outside the box” for ways to grow their ministry.

Leadership Development Grants offer a continuing opportunity to train our leaders, and spread that knowledge through trainings and workshops.

Partnership Grants support developing ministries, ongoing redevelopment opportunities, and congregations in special need.

The committee has worked closely with Pastor Jonathan Linman to develop a strong base from which to grow and support our internship program in the Synod. Increased funding and innovative ideas to assist the ability of our congregations and conferences to have an intern as part of their ministry, should help our internship program to grow and thrive.



The committee has been working with Deacon Margy Schmitt Ajer to develop a new committee: “Holy Closure.” This committee, which has been in discussion for several years, is coming to fruition this year. A group of experienced retired and semi-retired clergy will be assembled into one or more cadres. Each cadre will be composed of individuals with a wide variety of experiences and skills, and who will lend their strength, knowledge, and expertise to congregations whose mission has come to a close. This cadre will be there to support clergy and congregations as they move into the next part of their journey together.

The committee continues to support Pastor Lamont Wells, as needs arise for mission development and redevelopment. Pastor Wells keeps us updated on every project, and continues to get support and input from the committee.

The committee appreciates the tremendous support we receive from the Synod office and staff, as well as from our dedicated committee members.

SENT COMMITTEE

Barbara A. Johnson, *chair*

Committee Members

Dorothy Scholtz-Beyer, Ingrid Compton, Zachary Dean, Eric Faret, Sarah Humphrey, Masayo Kagita, Rev. Kevin O' Hara, Matilda Weekes

OUR MISSION

Our Mission is to do God's work in these ways:

Service: We strive to develop and deliver community programs that help people in both words and deeds.

Partnerships: We encourage organizations and ministries to support such programs.

Advocacy: We speak on and participate in specific justice and peace issues.

OUR WORK: WELCOME IS MORE THAN A SIGN— WELCOME IS AN ACTION WORD!

Our world is only as large or small as we make it. Have you ever been a stranger in a different land? What is your story about being welcomed?

The Sent Committee provided attendees at the 2018 Sent Forum, a first-hand account of immigration, with a speaker from Gambia, West Africa, who shared his compelling story of his journey to America. His story included leaving his family and facing fear, incarceration, and homelessness. The Sent Committee upholds, above all, "Care for Creation," by valuing every person as a creation of God. We care for the stranger by welcoming them into our ministries, congregations, and worshipping communities.



The Sent Committee has also championed the creation and publication of "Know Your Rights" cards, has created an Immigration Glossary, and is committed to encouraging congregations to become welcoming communities and to learn about Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation, and Opportunities (AMMPARO). From organizations that work with immigrants and asylum seekers, we have learned about their success in welcoming the stranger. During the 2018 Synod Assembly, we collaborated with Seafarer's International House and provided an Internet link to enable Synod attendees and MNYS members to contribute toiletries, socks, underwear, gift cards, etc., assisting in SIH's work of providing assistance to asylum seekers when they arrived at Seafarer's doors. Many asylum seekers are devoid of what we would identify as essential personal necessities. They leave their dangerous environment with few possessions, and yet—with tremendous hope. As an advocate for immigrants, the Sent Committee continues to find ways to assist organizations that provide services for this demographic.

Through the work of Lutheran Social Services of NY, we were able to speak to a social worker from Lutheran Immigration & Legal Services, to assist in identifying an asylum seeker who could share their journey narrative. We were interested in learning why and how they made the difficult decision to leave their family and homeland, and for what they hoped. They dreamed of a much better life and the possibility of becoming a United States citizen. We listened carefully to a compelling story and are pleased the individual is now employed and looking forward to having their family join them in the United States. This journey is not a foreign one, for we each know someone or have family members who were once the stranger in a new environment and needed to be welcomed.

FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

In 2018, the Sent Committee focused on immigration.

And this year, we will be making Welcome Bags to give to immigrants and asylum seekers. We determined that our 2016 personal care packets were useful and well-accepted, and that the distribution of these items will be reminders of our care for creation, God's creation—people.

South Texas Border - U.S. Customs and Border Protection provide assistance to unaccompanied alien children after they have crossed the border into the United States. Seen here during processing, a Custom's Field Officer provides food to unaccompanied children. Photo provided by: Eddie Perez



CARE FOR CREATION

The Sent Committee is building awareness on how we can all Care for Creation. It is our responsibility to care for and protect our environment, and every person is a part of this grand responsibility to nurture nature. The solution to successfully caring for all that inhabit God's great creation—Earth—may ultimately be in the mind and capabilities of an immigrant, asylum seeker or a member of an MNYS-worshipping community. We must care for each other. **Every action taken influences other actions, and in turn inspires the works and lives of all people.**

"For I was hungry, and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me."

—Saint Matthew 25:35

GET INVOLVED

We will be asking you to join with us in sponsoring items for Welcome Bags. We seek socks, toiletries, and other items to include in our 2019 Welcome Bags. Information will be available on info@mnys.org and in the Synod E-letter. We will be including God's word (New Testament Bibles) in English, Spanish and Haitian, bracelets imprinted with a cross, and drawstring backpacks with MNYS - Sent Committee ELCA imprinted on the bag.

The SENT Committee is building awareness of its work and asks you to join with us to:

- Welcome the stranger
- Feed the hungry
- Care for the sick
- Advocate for justice for ALL God's children
- Be the voice for those marginalized by society
- Share God's message of grace with others

If your Community has immigrants who worship with you and/or are served by you, please let us know, in order to afford us the opportunity to help those who may be in need of our assistance.

