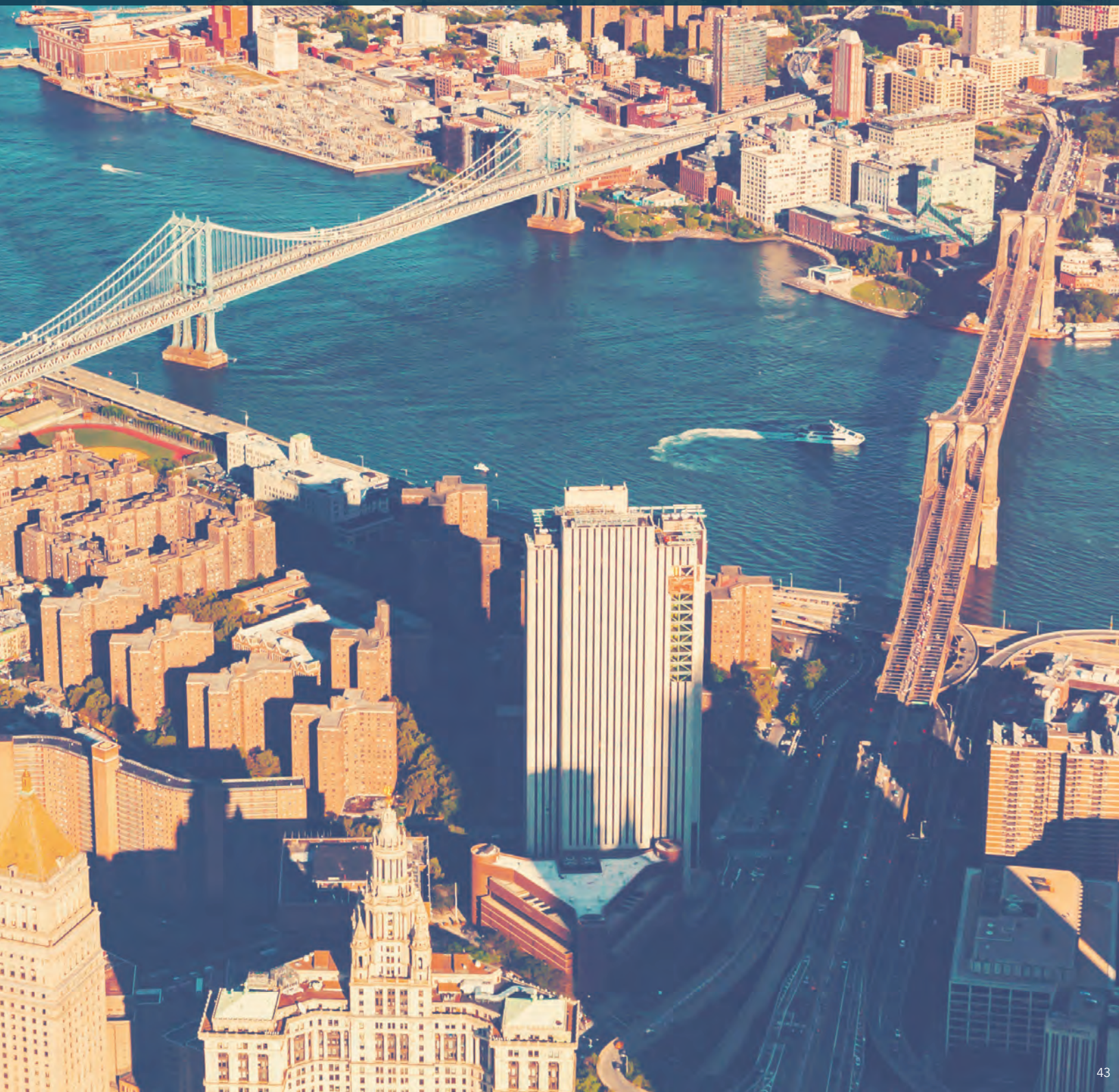


# STRATEGIC PLAN REPORTS





# CLAIMED COMMITTEE

## The Rev. Mark Erson, *chair*



### COMMUNICATION, CONNECTION, AND COMMITMENT.

The Claimed Committee continues to employ its key words: Communication, Connection, and Commitment.

The first part of this program year found us still in the Reformation 500 commemorative year of 2017.

With leadership from the Rev.

Jonathan Linman, and a special task

force, there were numerous events that sought to communicate the message of the Reformation: by Grace Alone, through Faith Alone, in Christ Alone, according to Scripture Alone, to the Glory of God Alone. Throughout the commemoration we looked for ways for our church to connect this message to contemporary life and to encourage a renewed sense of commitment to trusting and proclaiming the good news.

One of the high points of fall 2017 was the synod's hosting of Dr. Thomas Kaufmann, German scholar on the Reformation, who

offered two lectures on Martin Luther at Saint Peter's Church, New York City. The crowning event of our Reformation 500 commemoration was a worship service and reception on November 1 at the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. Our ecumenical partners joined us in celebrating the event's theme: Unity in Christ.

Our communications team was highly effective in getting the message out for our Reformation 500 service. In the 30-day period prior to the event, they were able to increase guest registration by 600 percent. Also, thanks to their efforts, Facebook engagement for the event increased by a phenomenal 1294 percent.

### BUILDING BRIDGES

Our website has been redesigned and was launched on April 17. All of our communications platforms have been redesigned as well. You should find the website easier to navigate and I hope you enjoy its modern feel and bold, new graphics. All of this image tinkering is a part of our larger plan of rebranding. By creating a fresh, new look we hope to speak more effectively to our existing stakeholders, while appealing to a younger audience and individuals of all ages from diverse backgrounds.

Our communications team was also highly effective in handling communications around the resignation of our former bishop, Robert Rimbo. While this was a challenging time for all of us, the able work of the communications team helped to mitigate serious repercussions. For one thing, we had virtually no press coverage of the resignation and that was decidedly to our advantage.

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As we look forward to the possibilities of 2018, we are putting particular emphasis on ministry to people in the first third of life (ages 1 – 30 years). And Deacon Margy Schmitt Ajer has joined the Claimed Committee as we lift up existing ministries within our synod and seek to **build bridges** between them, so that working together they may grow stronger and serve more people to the Glory of God alone.



# GATHERED COMMITTEE

## Hazel Goldstein, *chair*



**MEMBERS:** Pastor Amandus Derr,  
Pastor Mary Lou Baumgartner,  
Pastor Gary Schulz, Benjamin  
Snipes, Pastor Kahder  
Khalila, Deacon Carlos  
Lopez, William Henderson

**The objective  
of the Gathered  
Strategy is to  
ensure that Word**

**and Sacrament ministry is  
provided in the metropolitan New  
York area.**

### LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

With knowledge comes the opportunity to bridge cultural and economic gaps that exist in our congregations and communities. The Gathered Strategy committee continued to support Leadership Development Grants to enable congregations and individuals to increase their knowledge and to share it with others.

The Capitol Improvement grant program has continued to be helpful and effective in assisting congregations with issues with their church and congregational buildings, enabling them to focus on ministry, not buildings.

The newest grant program, "Building for Mission," offers a unique opportunity for congregations to apply for larger sums of money, for the purpose of upgrading or adding to their facility in order to "grow their mission." This grant is still in the working stages.

In addition, the committee continues to work with Pastor Lamont Wells, giving our consideration to congregations who may be in transition. Deacon Margy Schmitt-Ajer updates us on pastoral changes and calls. The committee is continuing to work on a Pastoral Care Committee focus to be sure we are there for congregations in transition.

**We continue our mission to ensure Word and Sacrament in the metropolitan New York area by creating opportunities for greater knowledge, supporting congregations in transition, and through our grant process.**

### BUILDING BRIDGES

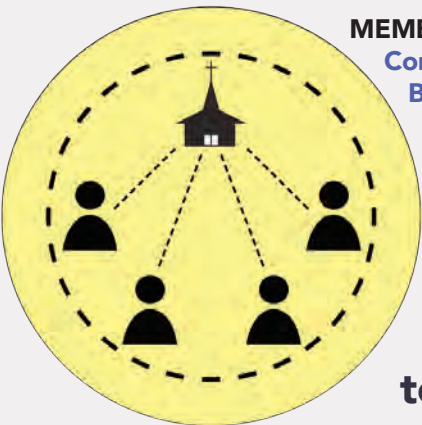
Educational opportunities create interaction among many members of our synod. Working together for a common goal unites us on many fronts. As our congregations work together to update and repair their church buildings, many opportunities for inclusiveness become available. Congregations in transition are being offered opportunities for new directions and change. Transitions are often difficult, but they can be an opportunity to create new friendships and continue to build a caring community. The committee encourages all members to become involved in the various opportunities available—through Leadership Development Grants, Sowers Grants, and Capital Improvement Challenge Grants. All these resources offer us





# SENT COMMITTEE

**Barbara A. Johnson, *chair***



**MEMBERS:** Synod Deacon Ingrid Compton, Deacon Dee Scholz-Beyer, Zach Dean, Synod Deacon Eric Faret, Rev. Kevin O'Hara

**The mission of the Sent Strategy is to network congregations, ministries and leaders to proclaim the Gospel, while responding to specific societal needs and issues.**

## **CARE FOR THE STRANGER AND ALIEN IN OUR MIDST**

The Sent Committee focused on immigration, which included Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA); Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO); and partnering with Seafarer's International House, Inc., whose mission work included assisting asylum seekers. We hosted an interactive accompaniment, advocacy and awareness-building program on Nov. 11, 2017, to provide an opportunity to experience the challenging journey to America experienced by many that migrate here. We role played being a member of an immigrant family. This was vital in building bridges. This experience also helped us to better understand the job responsibility of border agents, the rights of all citizens and immigrants, and gave congregations the opportunity to make commitments to becoming a welcoming congregation to immigrants. The afternoon included a meal-and-worship service, with Eucharist. It culminated with participants praying the Jericho Prayer seven times, before leaving the sanctuary in silence. The Sent Committee has discussed the fact that immigration also includes persons seeking asylum in the United States. We outstretch our arms to provide housing, food, employment opportunities, education, social services, etc., to those fleeing from war, weather disasters, religious persecution, sexual orientation persecution, and political persecution. We have invited Seafarer's International House to share their work and the journey of the asylum seekers who come to their door, or those they rescue from detention centers in New York or New Jersey. We build bridges by extending our hearts and our hands, and all that we have, to others.

The Sent Committee encourages all groups using the strategies of our Strategic Plan to nurture racial, ethnic, and cultural awareness in all their planning, as they continue to build bridges among God's children. We have worked to expand the education of our members and congregations by encouraging them to make commitments to be welcoming to the stranger. We will be providing information on the rights of all citizens, including the rights of undocumented individuals. We believe showing our faith through our actions of commitment will best exemplify our work to be advocates for justice and peace. By

**"The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt."-Leviticus 19:34**

having knowledge of the vocabulary of immigration and asylum seekers, we will be better equipped to gather together to travel the faith/immigration/asylum journey with our sisters and brothers.

## **BUILDING BRIDGES**

By focusing on immigration and how congregations, ministries and lay leaders can assist the immigrant, we gather information that assists us in not only providing avenues and bridges for our brothers and sisters, but also helps us build bridges among our brothers and sisters. We are all fundamentally the same and when we open ourselves up to receive the grace we have received through Christ's resurrection to direct our lives, we build bridges and grow love. We welcome the stranger, feed the stranger, clothe the stranger, and know this is the commission our Lord has given us.

Immigration is not just a word. Immigration represents people—people with hopes and dreams. People are not just words. Remembering that immigrants and asylum seekers have feelings, hopes, dreams and faith, just as we do, is critical as we build bridges. We build bridges by talking, walking, and

advocating for those who need us to speak when they cannot speak, walk where they cannot walk, and demand their rights as human beings and God's children when they cannot do so for themselves. Joining them in their journey for peace and justice builds bridges. Bridges can only be successful when they connect one side to the other, providing opportunities to meet along the way. Building bridges takes commitment and time; however, it must begin with us.



## GET INVOLVED!

***We welcome invitations to speak at your congregation about the work of the Sent Strategy Committee this year on immigration and on the missions we have engaged in during the last four years. The committee is responsible for the birth of the Anti-Racism Committee, a vital component of Building Bridges.***

**The Metropolitan New York Synod is a sanctuary synod, and protection and connections are available to assist persons in need. We will have these available at our synod assembly:**

1. Know-Your-Rights cards will be available for distribution.
2. Opportunities for members of the New York Sanctuary Coalition to speak with your congregation.
3. Contact members of government who can change unjust practices and laws.
4. Congregations and individuals can make a commitment to be advocates by attending hearings at detention centers.
5. Forms available to commit to being a sanctuary church.
6. Partner with Seafarer's International House, to provide items for Welcoming Bags for asylum seekers new to New York at **[www.seafarers.org](http://www.seafarers.org)**.
7. Contact Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service to obtain information on ways you can assist them in their mission. **[www.lirs.org](http://www.lirs.org)**.