

# THE LUTHERAN NEW YORKER

*festive*  
2019  
ISSUE



**GIVE THANKS BY GIVING**  
Help our Mission by visiting  
[mnys.org/2019MissionSupport](https://mnys.org/2019MissionSupport)

## STORIES *from our* SYNOD

your mission support gifts at work!

Reflections on the WorldPride NYC  
March 2019 | 6

Evangelism in the Modern World | 

Let the Little Children Come to Me | 21



**STAY CONNECTED** with us!

Subscribe to our email program by visiting [mnys.org/email](http://mnys.org/email)

# A MESSAGE FROM MNYS BISHOP PAUL EGENSTEINER

*giving thanks by giving*



*God's grace and peace  
be with you all.*

August was a month of new experiences for me; I began this journey as the bishop of the Metro NY Synod, and I attended my first Churchwide Assembly. Having never attended a Churchwide Assembly before, it was a bit overwhelming, to be honest. If you have been to our Synod Assembly, double

the number of participants and consider a much vaster geographical area - worldwide, in fact. Where does one find a place to enter in, to feel a sense of belonging, to embrace shared responsibility?

**Please allow me to share a few brief impressions. This Church, OUR Church, deeply cares for all God's children. This Church, OUR Church, seeks to be on the forefront of justice issues. This Church, OUR Church, deeply values the foundational presence and ministries of congregations and ministry sites that are doing God's work individually and collectively throughout this country.**

Having served this Church as a parish pastor for my entire ministry (until two months ago), I appreciate the work congregations do, the communities we provide for, and the tough times many of us face. Thankfully, Emanuel, the congregation I served, **understood Mission Support as an opportunity to "give thanks for all that has been," and contributed generously and regularly for "all that will be." We recognized that we were not independent, but rather in a blessed network of mutual care and ministry with the other congregations in our synod, the ELCA, and the world.**

**"For all that has been,  
thank you.  
For all that will be - Yes!"**

Dag Hammarskjold

So much of what we do as the Church, in all its expressions, depends on your generosity and thankful response to God's blessings in your life, whether that be providing resources to our pastors, providing recreational activities for migrant children in detention centers, beginning new outreach ministries in our synod, or countless other efforts.

**In short, the Church cannot carry out Christ's call to serve and transform this world without you and your gifts. Nor would we want to. So, as you look over these wonderful stories from our synod and your mission support at work, will you prayerfully consider your level of support and the opportunities before us? And, should you be so moved, make a contribution and share both this letter and information with your congregation.**

I thank God for your support and for being in ministry with you.

*In Christ,*

✠ Bishop Egensteiner

## GIVE THANKS BY GIVING

Consider making a donation  
for our Mission by visiting  
[mnys.org/2019MissionSupport](https://mnys.org/2019MissionSupport)



# OVERCOMING THE “poor me,” PROBLEM WITH gratitude

## A MESSAGE FROM MNYS VICE-PRESIDENT RENÉE WICKLUND



Being synod vice-president has a downside: The time commitment feeds my “poor me” problem. *Poor me. Between my job and my synod work and managing a family, I have no time for myself. Poor me. I feel overwhelmed.*

Do you have a “poor me” problem, too? It’s nothing to be ashamed of. That’s human nature. We see the world

through our own eyes, experiencing our own emotions, and chasing our own aspirations. Maybe you say, *Poor me. The furnace broke, so we won’t have money for a vacation this winter. Or, Poor me. I live so far from my children that I hardly see my grandkids.*

For any person, the first step in overcoming “poor me” can be **gratitude**.

*Poor me. Between my job and my synod work and managing a family, I have no time for myself.* With gratitude, that becomes, “I am so fortunate. I have a job to pay the bills, I have the skills and opportunity to serve my church, and I am blessed with a family to love.”

*Poor me. The furnace broke, so we won’t have money for a vacation this winter.* That becomes, “I am so fortunate. I have a home in which to reside, and a furnace to keep me warm when the weather turns cold.”

*Poor me. I live so far from my children that I hardly see my grandkids.* That becomes, “I am so fortunate. My children have the ability to live on their own, and they have given me a legacy, another generation.”

The power of gratitude as a response to self-pity seems pretty evident; we are happier when we feel fulfilled, not lacking.

**I’d like to pose a different challenge: For us as Christians, is there a second step in overcoming the “poor me” problem? When we take God’s will for us into account, does gratitude lead to another step?**

I believe it does. I believe that not only should we train ourselves to experience gratitude, but that the Gospel teaches us also to turn gratitude into action. (e.g., Mark 6:19-21; Luke 11:13.) That is, we are called to equip others with the tools they need to become grateful too.

It’s a great sign of gratitude for me to say, “I am so fortunate. I have a job to pay the bills, I have the skills and opportunity to serve my church, and I am blessed with family to love.” But as a Christian, do I truly open my heart to receive the gifts of God’s love if I am surrounded by neighbors who are without employment, without meaningful opportunity to follow their passion, or experiencing loneliness? I don’t think I do. If I make no effort to alleviate the suffering of others, I find myself struggling to live my entire calling.

So, the next step is to ask how I can help others who also find themselves in this same place. For example, if my family is provided for, then I have enough to contribute to mission support, to bolster the programs that feed and clothe my neighbors, to take care of individuals and families while they get back on their feet, to provide fellowship to the lonely. **Gratitude demands response. Gratitude leads to giving.** (Matthew 5:16; Luke 6:38; John 15:12.) Indeed, science agrees with the Gospel. Studies have found that gratitude and altruism go hand-in-hand; that grateful people experience more inner reward when their money goes to charity than when they spend on themselves. See David Degras et al., “A General Benevolence Dimension That Links Neural, Psychological, Economic, and Life-Span Data on Altruistic Tendencies,” *JOURNAL OF EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY: GENERAL* (145:10, 2016).



Let's call the process a full-scale reversal of the "poor me" problem. *Poor me. The furnace broke, so we won't have money for a vacation this winter.*

- I am so fortunate. I have a home in which to reside, and a furnace to keep me warm when the weather turns cold.
- **Staying at home will save me even more money than the furnace repair. I can donate some for shelters and soup kitchens.**

*Poor me. I live so far from my children that I hardly see my grandkids.*

- I am so fortunate. My children have the ability to live on their own, and they have given me a legacy, another generation.
- **Some neighbors my age have no family at all and worry about their future. I can visit with them and provide companionship, or volunteer with a social club.**

When we turn self-pity into gratitude, God can turn that gratitude into giving. In the Beatitudes, Jesus tells us, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." (Matthew 5:8.) A heart filled with self-pity is cloudy. Pure is the heart made eager to give.

## GIVE THANKS BY GIVING

Consider making  
a donation  
for our

Mission by visiting  
[mnys.org/2019MissionSupport](https://mnys.org/2019MissionSupport)



# reflections ON THE MNYS PARTICIPATION DURING THE "2019 NYC WORLD PRIDE MARCH"

## "THIS BISHOP LOVES YOU"

By MNYS Bishop Paul Egensteiner



*"Thank you."*

*"We love you, too, Bishop."*

I received many moving responses as I participated with members of our synod in the Pride Parade on June 30th in New York City. One response was to a sign I was carrying, along with Bishops McCoid and Burkat, that said, **"This Bishop Loves You."** As I marched, I tried to make eye contact with as many people as possible who were cheering us on or standing quietly. Often my attention would be drawn to the person who was looking intently at me, at our presence as the Church. What had their experiences of church been? I wondered. What were they expecting our attitude to be toward them, even now? I made a special effort to reach out to such people, either with a simple thumbs up, or a handshake or high five, or simply a greeting of "Happy Pride!"

One connection that stands out to me in particular: A young man shook my hand and said something to me that, amidst the joyful noises around us, I didn't catch. "Could you say that again?" I asked. In a quiet, tentative voice he repeated, **"You mean I'm not going to hell?" I was stunned. "No," I said. (Along with Bishop Eaton, I believe there is a hell but it is empty, by the grace of the Father and the love of Jesus.) "God loves you!" He held my hand a little longer and then said, "Come here. Give me a hug." As I did so, he repeated his initial question, "So, I'm not going to hell, right?" "No!" I repeated, maybe a little more emphatically this time. "God LOVES you!"**

I pray that, in that brief encounter, the Spirit opened a new way of understanding in this man's heart. **I know the Spirit did in mine!**

What is our mission as the Church? What is our purpose? First of all, to realize that the message and power of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ is to embody for us the love and acceptance of our gracious God. **Our first mission is to listen.**

**And then to tell.** The world in which we live, and of which we are a part, is hurting, maybe more than ever in this global society in which we find ourselves. **And we have a Word, a gracious Word to speak to that pain, that alienation, that fear.**

**"You are loved. By God, no less!"**

This is where we begin. This Gospel is not a treasure we hoard, but a gift given to us that we, in turn, give. Freely. Extravagantly. Prodigally. As it has been given to us.

**Please, my dear siblings in Christ, TELL somebody this Good News!** You may never know the peace that comes, the hope that is rekindled in that person's heart. But you will know the joy and love of the very message you have shared on your own.

## "MY JOURNEY AS AN LGBTQIA+ ALLY"

By **The Rev. Claire Schenot Burkat**, Retired Bishop, Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA



When Bishop McCoid invited me to ride with him and newly-elected Bishop Egensteiner at the NYC PRIDE Parade, I was honored and thrilled for reasons only the Holy Spirit would have known. **That parade was part of a 50-year journey of God leading me to be an ally for the LGBTQIA+ community in private and public ways.**

The beginning of that journey was in 1967 when, as a 16-year-old, a friend from my church, Holy Trinity Bellerose in Queens, New York, shared that he was questioning his sexual orientation. He and I were both relieved that our Luther League group and Pinecrest Lutheran Leadership Camp

welcomed him with open hearts. Nine years later, while serving in my seminary internship in Philadelphia, two gay men approached me to help start the first East Coast chapter of Lutherans Concerned for Gay People, in 1976. **That very summer, one of my brothers came out to my parents and family as a gay man. I was slowly realizing that God was leading me to become an ally for the LGBTQIA+ community.**

In my first parish, we supported a help center for gay teenagers and parents of gay children. Sadly, like so many, I lost several friends to HIV/AIDS in the pandemic of the 80s and 90s. **After I was elected bishop in 2006, I witnessed first-hand the difficulty and heartbreak of gay people struggling to find acceptance in the ELCA. I did my best to fight for the constitutional and social changes necessary for our denomination to truly be an inclusive church.**

I was thrilled to see the joy, tears, laughter, love and expressions of gratitude as Metro NY Lutherans gave witness in the 2019 NY World PRIDE March. It was a true celebration of LGBTQIA+ persons, which brought back memories of fifty years of my own journey to advocacy. The Holy Spirit has been working with me and with our church, as joyful and painful as that has been, for a long time...**but that wonderful day, Metro NY Lutherans were able to rejoice and Ride with PRIDE!**

## "GOD'S STEADFAST LOVE IS FOR EVERYONE"

By Former **MNYS Bishop Donald McCoid**

As I participated in the Pride Parade, there were many feelings that flooded over me. Through the years, the church has not always been welcoming to the LGBT community. For me to carry a sign that said **"This Bishop ❤️ you,"** was a powerful opportunity to say to the LGBTQIA+ community that the church's message was a welcoming love for all people. Tears welled in my eyes as I remembered times when I felt excluded because I grew up in Appalachia. Being excluded hurts. The church's message of inclusivity is so important in today's world. I have been blessed to be a part of the Metropolitan New York Synod's witness and proclamation of God's steadfast love for everyone ... at a Pride Parade and every day.



## "DANCING WITH PRIDE"

By **The Rev. Becca Seely**, Co-Chair of the MNYS Anti-Racism Strategy, and Executive Director of The Vine NYC Campus Ministry Network and its parent organization, Lutheran Ministries in Higher Education



At the MNYS PRIDE Mass, a gifted woman from St. John's Lutheran Church's Gospel Night community performed a contemporary pop-gospel song, the chorus of which rings out joyfully: "When Jesus say[s] yes, nobody can say no!" Marching in World Pride was, for me, a witness to Jesus' exuberant and resounding YES to this whole world God loves. In a cultural moment that is so divisive and in which religion is used again and again as an excuse to say "no" to entire communities, it was an incredible gift to be able to march and dance and sing and proclaim Jesus' YES, not just to oft-excluded LGBTQ+ people like me, but to every person who has been made to feel insufficient or like an outsider. The good news is not that LGBTQ+ are finally welcome at the table in the Lutheran church, but that every single human being is welcome at the table of God, and God will not rest until all are set free and given their rightful place.

## "QUEER, LUTHERAN, AND PASTOR"

By **The Rev. William Kroeze**, Chair of the MNYS Worship Committee

As a queer, Lutheran Christian and pastor, the fiftieth anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising, together with NYC hosting LGBTQ+ siblings and their allies from around the world, provided an incredible opportunity to give witness to God's extravagant, radical love for all. Marching side-by-side with my fellow Lutherans from the Metro New York Synod was a powerful statement of our church's commitment to being a place of welcome and acceptance, while at the same time publicly recognizing Christianity's role in the oppression and marginalization of the LGBTQ+ community and our need for continual repentance. While the spirit of celebration was infectious, I know that I left the march reminded of the continual need to channel our energy into continuing the work of justice and reconciliation for queer people around the world, especially because so much of the pain—and even death—inflicted upon us has been at the hands of our fellow Christians. While our community has much to celebrate, there is still so much work to be done, in Jesus' name!



## "A HOLY SPIRIT MOMENT"

By **María Rodas**, Member of MNYS Staff



On the day of the PRIDE March, I was hesitating to attend - my little daughter was feeling a little under the weather and was asking for her *Mamá*. However, I had one of those experiences that I describe as a "Holy Spirit Moment," and felt called to leave my little one with her father, attend the PRIDE March, and show my love and support to our LGBTQIA+ siblings out there. The presence of the Lutheran Church in the PRIDE March was significant to me because it reflects how welcoming we are, and how much we care for one another. **At the end of the day, we are all Children of God, and we need to not only accept our diversity, but celebrate it!**

## "NOTHING LIKE A CLERGY IN THEIR COLLAR"

By **Christopher Vergara**, Member of MNYS Executive Committee

I have participated many times in the Pride March, and no matter the organization, its message, or how cool a float they may have, I have yet to see anything as moving to individuals watching the march, as a clergy person, in their collar, sharing the good news that God loves them, and that they are welcome in our churches. Hands down, the best witness we can give at PRIDE.



## "THERE IS A PLACE FOR YOU HERE"

By Linda Robertson, Member of an MNYS Congregation



We watched people's faces as our float and marchers came by. They read our sign – "There is a place for you here." Curious, then eyes opening wide in surprise and joy they smiled, tugged on the arms of friends, pointed and said, "look, it's a CHURCH! And there are pastors and BISHOPS!" They cried, yelled "thank you, thank you", called us over to give or get a hug and cheered and cheered.

It's one thing to preach "God loves you" from inside the church, but quite another to go to the 'home' of people who have been shunned and condemned by organized religion and tell them "God. Loves. You." **MNYS literally came to our street saying: 'You are loved by God. Not excluded, not just tolerated; but welcomed and celebrated for exactly who you are. God sees you, we see you, and you belong.'**

Sadly, some churches tell LGBTQ+ people that who we are is 'inherently evil.' LGBTQ+ youth are almost 5 times more likely to attempt suicide than straight youth. The loving outreach from MNYS is not only life affirming but lifesaving. It was a long day waiting for our turn to step-off, but the joy and healing of God's love received and shared with others was worth every minute.



# THE LUTHERAN NEW YORKER, AT YOUR DOORSTEP!

Each quarter, copies of this beloved magazine are sent to each of our congregations.

We are considering offering **Individual Subscriptions** to all of you Lutheran New Yorkers out there!

## Are you interested?

Let us know, by visiting [MNYS.org/TLNY](https://mnys.org/TLNY)



THE LUTHERAN  
NEW YORKER

# evangelism IN THE MODERN WORLD

By **Roberto Lara**, MNYS Director of Communications

With advocacy being a huge part of our calling, we have implemented PR and cross-channel strategies, and a plethora of advocacy programs to let the world know about our radically welcoming mission, and in this way, reach out to potential new members for ALL our congregations, a.k.a. EVANGELISM.



(Don't forget to visit our recently optimized "Find a Church" page on our website at [mnys.org/findachurch](https://mnys.org/findachurch)).

Jesus was the ultimate communicator, but he didn't just speak with or listen to people.

He connected with people by using tools other than just words; the principal intent of communication for Jesus was **connection**. Through his actions and his guidance, Jesus sought to transform people rather than simply feeding them information. As leaders within the Metro New York Synod, we have these same responsibilities. Through communication, **we are the ultimate evangelists**, spreading the Gospel with great enthusiasm. In this digital age, our modes of communication are plentiful, diverse, and perpetually changing, but what remains constant is our mission to communicate all the good things God has done and to share the news with our synodical community and beyond.

In our modern world, people feel a connection to causes rather than to organizations, and through this connection,

personal and spiritual fulfillment is gained. Within the MNYS, it has been our mission to reach beyond the boundaries that confine and define most organizations, be they religious or secular. With advocacy being a huge part of our calling, we have implemented PR and cross-channel strategies and a plethora of advocacy programs to let the world know about our radically welcoming mission, and in this way, reach out to potential new members for our congregations (a.k.a. Evangelism). **We strive to reflect God's limitless love for all people.**

Through various advocacy programs, the MNYS-ELCA seeks to welcome, unite, guide, and support its people. By spreading God's love in a widely inclusive way, one feels that one's identity, and the personal path one has chosen, is supported, and in this way, lives are spiritually enriched. **From immigration advocacy to youth programs, and from opioid crises support to feeding those in need, we are truly Church Together in our celebration of diversity and through our promotion of peace.**



Your generous support enables us to implement this modern-day Evangelism strategy.

Consider making a donation at [mnys.org/2019missionsupport](https://mnys.org/2019missionsupport) to help us reach new members for our churches.

Before He left the earth, Jesus gave the command, "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation" (Mark 16:15). The specifics on how the disciples were to "go" were never outlined, and therefore we must continue to work with diligence and resolve to carry on the Good News. **Each day that we come together in support and appreciation of one another, we are helping to build a strong and committed community of evangelists who share the word and the love of the Lord.**

"I FEEL THE SAME WAY!"

"I HAD NO IDEA, THAT IS SO INTERESTING."

"THIS OFFERS ME A NEW PERSPECTIVE!"

## WHAT DOES THE LUTHERAN NEW YORKER MEAN TO YOU?

Let us know what **you** think of **The Lutheran New Yorker**.

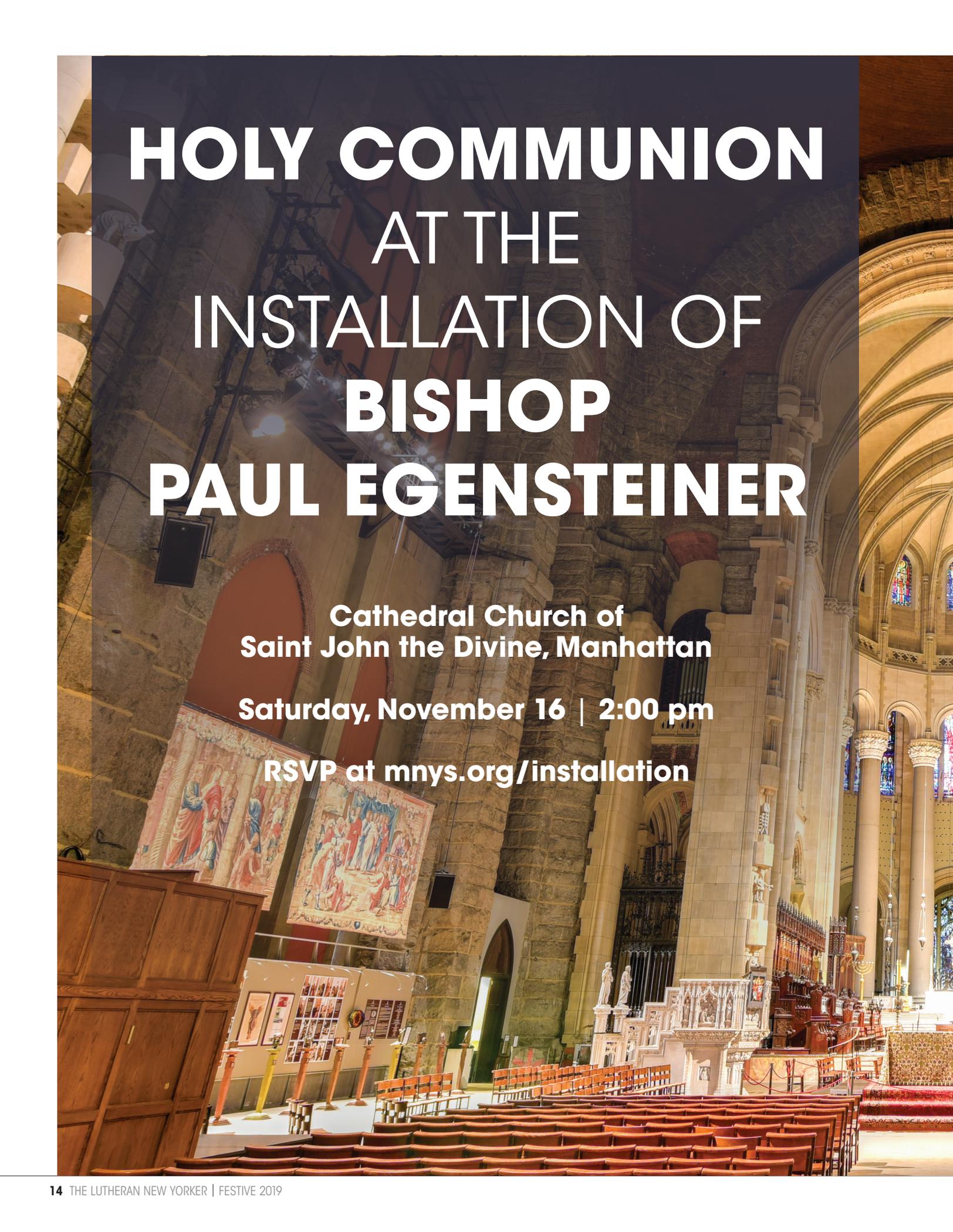
Visit [MNYS.org/TLNY](https://MNYS.org/TLNY), and tell us about your favorite stories, news & articles.

**Share** with us! We are here for you.

**THANK YOU!**



THE LUTHERAN  
NEW YORKER



# **HOLY COMMUNION AT THE INSTALLATION OF BISHOP PAUL EGENSTEINER**

**Cathedral Church of  
Saint John the Divine, Manhattan**

**Saturday, November 16 | 2:00 pm**

**RSVP at [mnys.org/installation](https://mnys.org/installation)**

## SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

**Would you like make a donation toward the MNYS Bishop Installation Event?** Your generous gift makes it possible to host this special event, provide hospitality for our ecumenical guests, enable musicians and dancers to lead the assembly in singing and dancing God's praise, and to broaden the worship participation by offering the service via live stream.

**"We Are Church" Circle** | \$2,500 and more

**Magnificat Circle** | \$1,500 - \$2,499

**Global Communion Circle** | \$1,000 - \$1,499

**Fortress Circle** | \$750 - \$999

**Martin Luther Circle** | \$250 - \$749

**Katharina von Bora Circle** | \$100 - \$249

**Philipp Melanchthon Circle** | up to \$99

**Gifts received by NOVEMBER 1 will be featured in our online bulletin for our Facebook livestream audience.**

Send checks payable to **MNYS**, with  
**"Bishop Installation"**  
in the memo line, to:

**475 Riverside Drive Suite 1620 • New York, NY 10115.**

You can also use the "Add-On"  
feature on the registration page.

For more information about sponsorship opportunities,  
please send an email to **info@mnys.org**.

# WHAT WE *practice*, WE *become*

## MISSION WALK: AN EPISCOPAL/LUTHERAN JOURNEY

By **Branden Dupree**, Interim Director for Evangelical Mission



*"I need prayer," a voice declares. Mother Gladys, without hesitation, answers, "Food pantry is a blessing, an answer to our prayers. May the Lord be with you..."*

On this warm August evening, Rev. Gladys Diaz is standing behind the table stationed at Mission Walk's entrance, armed with a laptop, registration forms, and a smile. This is at the end of a long day of registering participants for the now two-month-old food pantry in partnership with Food Bank for New York City. On Wednesdays, registrants receive a text for their timed appointment, and are invited to come "shop" for a variety of healthy food options and prayer. As Mother Gladys registers walk-ins and greets passersby, there is a focused energy that won't be ignored.

A young couple waits patiently on the growing line to register for next week's timed appointments, but also to figure out what makes Mission Walk special. In addition to the model of collaboration with the Episcopal Diocese of New York, they learn about transformative ministry and gain insight into Academia & Latinx programming. The couple mentions that they are a few days into living in the neighborhood, but remember The Rev. Diaz from being present to greet them on the way to work, and therefore decided to return that afternoon.

*"The norms have changed. Leaders aren't only walking into our spaces, so you go to the places where the conversations happen." Rev. Diaz says. "This practice is what shapes disciples and our ministry."*

In our increasingly secular world, it feels like the only constant is change. At **Mission Walk: An Episcopal Lutheran Journey** in the Bronx, Rev. Gladys Diaz is leading the community into this change through visibility and asset-based relationships.



Mission Developments like  
**"Mission Walk: An Episcopal Lutheran Journey"**  
are made possible thanks to your Mission Support contributions.

Consider making a donation at  
**[mnys.org/2019missionsupport](https://mnys.org/2019missionsupport)**

# MISSION SUPPORT AT WORK, *confronting racism*

By **The Rev. Marcia Parkinson-Harrison & The Rev. Becca Seely**,  
Co-Chairs of the MNYS Anti-Racism Strategy



## **WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER**

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.

## **OUR MISSION & WORK**

During the 2018-19 program year, the MNYS Anti-Racism Strategy Committee was very busy. Among other initiatives, the Anti-Racism Strategy Enabler 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. 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 CrossRoads. The Equipping Leaders Subcommittee began producing discussion guide resources for congregational use, which are available on our website. 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 relationships, 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.

*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.*



**THE EVERY CONGREGATION CHALLENGE**

At Synod Assembly, the Anti-Racism Committee kicked off a new anti-racism initiative for 2019: **The Every Congregation Challenge**. We are challenging every congregation in the Synod to engage in at least one intentional time of learning and conversation about racism this year.

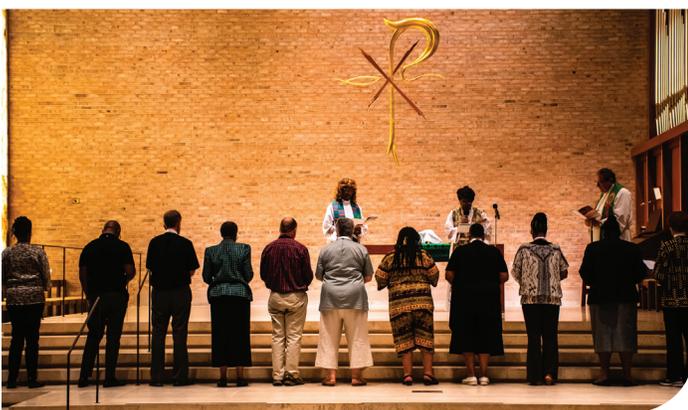
In order to help facilitate this, we have assembled resources and discussion guides for you to use in your context. We have a variety of topics to choose from, and within each topic there are different ways to engage—from reading an article or watching a short video, to a movie night or a book study. These are great for use in an adult education hour or a special event. You can even pick your own resource to discuss.

The goal is to get the conversation started—or to help it go deeper—and to use these occasions of learning and growing together as a starting point for challenging racist practices and systems in our churches and communities.

**Planning to participate? Visit [mnys.org/our-work/the-every-congregation-challenge](http://mnys.org/our-work/the-every-congregation-challenge) for more information.**

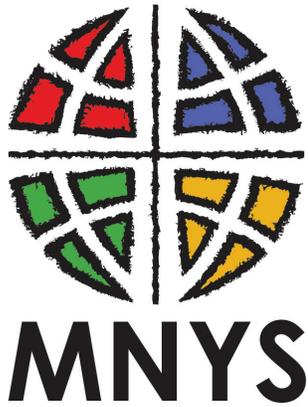


Bilingual anti-racism training at Sion Iglesia Luterana, Manhattan



Urban Leaders Institute 2019

**GIVING THANKS BY GIVING**  
*We are grateful for the Mission Support that enables us to do this work and we pray that this committee will continue to find ways to empower leaders, change racist systems, and collaborate with congregations to bring about real change in our church and communities.*



# 2020 MISSION SUPPORT COMMITMENT

**Mission support from  
all, including subsidized  
congregations, is a sign of our  
partnership in the Gospel.**



**Make a pledge for 2020 by visiting:  
[mnys.org/congregations/2020-mission-support-commitment](https://mnys.org/congregations/2020-mission-support-commitment)**

### **2019 MISSION SUPPORT**

**All mission support for the fiscal year 2019 (ending January 31, 2020)  
should be received in the synod's office by February 7, 2020.**

**For more information, send an email to [info@mnys.org](mailto:info@mnys.org)**

# LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN

# *come to me*

By **Christopher Vergara**,  
Chair of the MNYS Sanctuary/AMMPARO Ministry



Answering the call to take care of the stranger among us, the Metropolitan New York Synod has declared itself a **sanctuary synod** and a **welcoming synod** in the ELCA's AMMPARO Network. The word "amparo" in Spanish means, the protection of a living creature from suffering or damage. The ELCA's strategy to Accompanying Migrant Minors with Protection, Advocacy, Representation and Opportunities (AMMPARO) was envisioned after witnessing the plight of children who are forced to flee their communities because of complex and interrelated reasons, including chronic violence, poverty, environmental displacement and lack of opportunities in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. At its March meeting, the synod council, once again, answered a call to care for migrant minors in our synod by establishing our synod's Sanctuary/AMMPARO Ministry.

The Sanctuary/AMMPARO Ministry is working to provide regular Word/Sacrament ministry and pastoral care to minors in immigration detention centers in our synod, lead and coordinate participation by members of this synod in the weekly Jericho Walk around Federal Plaza, create a Sanctuary Youth Group that coordinates monthly outings with minors in detention, generate a list of housing availabilities for migrant minors released from custody, coordinate with the ELCA AMMPARO network, and recommend and coordinate opportunities for the Synod to engage in immigration-related public policy.

***"but Jesus said,  
'Let the little children come to  
me, and do not stop them; for  
it is to such as these that the  
kingdom of heaven belongs.'"***

**From the Gospel according to Saint Matthew**

To provide the proper resources to do this work the synod council created the Sanctuary Ministry Fund. This fund is used to support the ministry, but also to pay for bonds to release migrant minors from detention and to help pay fees associated with those applying for asylum. Understanding that the need is great and that the fund is not unlimited, we have focused our efforts with minors and young adults (as in 21-year-olds and younger). As we try to be intersectional in our work, when able, we focus our work on those who are doubly marginalized by our unjust immigration system: single mothers, queer persons, indigenous people, etc. The synod has already paid the bonds to release four migrant minors from detention and is in the process of paying the asylum processing fees for an 8-year-old girl who is being separated from her mother who has already been granted asylum. We have also paid for flights for two minors so they could be reunited with their mothers, from whom they had been separated. We are excited to announce that one of the minors whose bond we paid, has recently received his working permit and social security number, meaning he can live with more dignity as he awaits his court date.

***"I may not understand your religion, but I  
am deeply committed to your mission and  
what you are doing with these kids. You can  
count on us as a partner in this work"***

**Alex Ghinger, President,  
Gotham Knights Rugby Football Club**

“THEY CAME FIRST for the Communists,  
and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Communist.

THEN THEY CAME for the Jews,  
and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a Jew.

THEN THEY CAME for the trade unionists,  
and I didn’t speak up because I wasn’t a trade unionist.

THEN THEY CAME for the Catholics,  
and I didn’t speak up because I was a Protestant.

THEN THEY CAME for me,  
and by that time no one was left to speak up.”

**Martin Niemoeller**  
*Lutheran Pastor*

This statement, attributed to Pastor Niemoeller, has become a legendary expression of the lesson of the Holocaust. Ironically, Niemoeller had delivered anti-Semitic sermons early in the Nazi regime. He later opposed Hitler and was sent to a concentration camp.

Photo by Yunner

Our synod’s Sanctuary Youth Group continues to provide children in detention with recreational, cultural, educational, and artistic outings, while providing them access to pastoral care. So far, we have been able to go rock climbing at The Cliff, had a rugby field day with the Gotham Knights RFC on Randall’s Island, had a soccer field day with coaches at Upper 90 Soccer Queens, spent the day learning about immigrant artist Louise Nevelson and then actually creating art in her style, and most recently, learned about God’s wonderful creation with a trip to the Bronx Zoo. We were surprised to hear that we were the only organization working to provide these types of outings for these children, which makes them so much more important.

*“Nevelson Chapel is honored to partner with the Sanctuary Ministry, enabling migrant minors to tell their stories by creating collage/assemblage artworks inspired by Louise Nevelson. Their stories resonate with her own story, having immigrated to the United States as a castoff of an increasingly anti-Jewish Europe.”*

**Nevelson Legacy Council**



*“I am forever grateful to the MNYS and its Sanctuary/AMMPARO Ministry for paying to get me out of the detention center. The unexpected gift has been the community I have found in the parish community I have been welcomed into, who are accompanying me through this difficult process of living with more dignity and hope.”*

**Lucas, migrant minor**

We are excited to see how individual congregations have partnered with our Sanctuary/AMMPARO Ministry. Saint Stephen's Lutheran Church in Hicksville held their Latin Band Concert and Dance, with proceeds going toward the Sanctuary Ministry Fund. Trinity Lutheran in Astoria hosted the Sanctuary Youth Group for lunch after our day of soccer and then assembled and donated about 50 backpacks filled with school supplies for migrant minors in detention. Saint James-Saint Matthew's Lutheran Church in South Ozone Park held our first pop-up immigration clinic. And over the summer, members of Pinecrest and a number of deans led their conferences as they participated in Jericho Walks around Federal Plaza.

While only having been formed less than a year ago, AMMPARO Ministry has been very busy at work and it is all made possible because of your mission support dollars. For that, your Sanctuary/AMMPARO Ministry Team and about 250+ migrant minors say THANK YOU!



## **DONATE TO HELP UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT MINORS**

The Sanctuary Ministry Fund was established to help support the work of our Sanctuary Ministry. Your donation will help our synod provide migrant minors with protection, advocacy, representation, and opportunity.

A gift of \$4,000 will help provide a minor's asylum application and processing.

A gift of \$500 – \$1,250 will provide an outing of our Sanctuary Youth Group for 30 –50 minors in detention.

A gift of \$200 – \$500 will provide a welcome packet for a minor recently released from detention.

A gift of \$121 will provide a monthly MetroCard for a minor recently released from detention.

A gift of \$75 – \$100 will provide a cell phone for a minor to remain in contact with family, lawyers, and case workers.

As bonds to be released from detention range from \$1,500 to as great as \$10,000, a gift of any size will be combined with others to help change the life of an unaccompanied migrant minor.

**Send checks payable to MNYS,  
with "Sanctuary Ministry"  
in the memo line, to:  
475 Riverside Drive Suite 1620,  
New York, NY 10115.**

*“As a pastor, who is also an immigrant to this country, I cannot tell you what it feels like to speak with a hopeless young adult recently transferred to a detention center, or with a scared 6-year-old who doesn't know if they will get to see their mom again. The Sanctuary/AMMPARO Ministry, resulting from your mission support, enables us to tell that child that they are not alone, and that God loves them.”*

**The Rev. Fabian Arias,  
Sanctuary/AMMAPRO Ministry Coordinator**



THE LUTHERAN  
NEW YORKER

THANK YOU!



**Metropolitan New York Synod**  
**Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.