



THE LUTHERAN  
NEW YORKER

summer  
2021  
ISSUE

# 2021 DIGITAL ANNUAL ASSEMBLY



We Are Church **TOGETHER**



METROPOLITAN NEW YORK SYNOD  
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

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# 2021 MISSION SUPPORT

Now, more than ever, we must support each other and share the Good News TOGETHER, as we will remain essential TOGETHER. Your contributions ensure the success of this collective effort.

Mission support dollars come back to congregations in the form of grants, services, programs, and resources, **and this support is more important than ever for ALL our congregations as we begin to recover from this crisis.**

Your  
commitment  
embodies our  
partnership  
in the  
Gospel!

**WE ARE DEPLOYED TOGETHER,  
WE ARE ESSENTIAL TOGETHER,  
WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER!**



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# A WELCOME *letter* FROM OUR BISHOP



Dear Friends in Christ,

Welcome to our 2021 (Digital) Assembly. This year's theme, **We Are Church TOGETHER**, has been and will continue to be lived out in ways most of us hadn't anticipated not long ago but that still embody the reality of our common identity as children of God. In our gathering we will celebrate and reaffirm our commitment to the Gospel and to each other, hear

about significant ministries, and gratefully acknowledge our partnership within our synod and as members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and with our ecumenical companions.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us all to experiment with digital platforms and tools while expanding our creativity. One of the blessings in this is that the Church has become even more accessible and welcoming. Congregations are reaching new audiences, unrestricted by geographical limitations. The digital form of this assembly will be one that is familiar (if not ideal) to us and enables us to be sensitive to those most vulnerable among us and the responsibility of advanced planning.

We will be offering inspiring and informative sessions throughout this year's two-day digital assembly and addressing what will guide our life in the next year as we recover from the pandemic and seek to integrate the lessons we have learned as a result. I am excited to share with you my vision for our synod which is a reinvigorating of our previously approved strategic plan and is focused on our mission and guides and supports the witness of all of us as disciples of Jesus. Additionally, you will have the opportunity to hear from my bright, dedicated and hard-working staff as they report on the various missional strategies they led during this difficult year and impart their hopes and visions for the future of the synod.

We are grateful and delighted to have The Rev. Albert Starr, Director for Ethnic-Specific, Multicultural Ministries and Racial Justice Team, at our assembly, as our ELCA representative. We welcome him and give thanks for his leadership; he has been an inspiration for us in these challenging times. The Rev. Starr will share with us important information regarding the future of our church, from a churchwide perspective.

**The holy ministry we share as leaders, congregations and churchwide partners is crucial to our discipleship and empowers us to live the Gospel.** We have planned for and are expecting a wonderful and meaningful time together this summer. **This 2021 assembly, my first as your bishop, will be a celebration of our resilience and unity as a synod and as the Church.**

**My prayer is that this assembly will be a reminder that we are stronger and more effective in our witness to Jesus Christ when We Are Church TOGETHER.**

Yours in Christ,

✠ Bishop Egensteiner



*Photo by Bob Williams*

Queridos Amigos en Cristo,

Bienvenido a nuestra Asamblea (Digital) 2021. El tema de este año, **Somos Iglesia JUNTOS**, ha sido y seguirá siendo vivido de maneras que la mayoría de nosotros no habíamos anticipado hace mucho tiempo, pero que aún encarnan la realidad de nuestra identidad común como hijos de Dios. En nuestra reunión celebraremos y reafirmaremos nuestro compromiso con el Evangelio y entre nosotros; escucharemos sobre ministerios importantes, y reconoceremos con gratitud nuestra asociación dentro de nuestro sínodo y como miembros de la Iglesia Evangélica Luterana en América, y con nuestros compañeros ecuménicos.

La pandemia de COVID-19 nos ha obligado a todos a experimentar con plataformas y herramientas digitales mientras expandimos nuestra creatividad. Una de las bendiciones de esto es que la Iglesia se ha vuelto aún más accesible y acogedora. Las congregaciones están llegando a nuevas audiencias sin restricciones geográficas. La forma digital de esta asamblea será familiar -si no ideal- y nos permitirá ser sensibles a los más vulnerables entre nosotros, así como a ser responsables de la planificación avanzada.

Ofreceremos sesiones inspiradoras e informativas en este año de montaje digital de dos días. Abordaremos lo que guiará nuestra vida el próximo año a medida que nos recuperamos de la pandemia y buscamos integrar las lecciones que hemos aprendido como resultado. Estoy emocionado de compartir con ustedes mi visión para nuestro sínodo, la misma que revitaliza nuestro plan estratégico previamente aprobado,

se centra en nuestra misión y guía y apoya el testimonio de todos nosotros como discípulos de Jesús. Además, tendrán la oportunidad de escuchar a mi equipo brillante, dedicado y trabajador, mientras informan sobre las diversas estrategias misionales que lideraron durante este año difícil e imparten sus esperanzas y visiones para el futuro del sínodo.

Estamos agradecidos y encantados de tener al Rev. Albert Starr, Director del Equipo de Justicia Racial y Ministerios Específicos Étnicos, Multiculturales, en nuestra asamblea, como nuestro representante de la ELCA. Le damos la bienvenida y agradecemos su liderazgo; él ha sido una inspiración para nosotros en estos tiempos desafiantes. El reverendo Starr compartirá con nosotros información importante sobre el futuro de nuestra iglesia desde una perspectiva nacional.

**El santo ministerio que compartimos como líderes, congregaciones y socios de la iglesia es crucial para nuestro discipulado y nos da poder para vivir el Evangelio.** Hemos planeado y esperamos un tiempo maravilloso y significativo juntos este verano. **Esta asamblea 2021, la primera como su obispo, será una celebración de nuestra resiliencia y unidad como sínodo y como Iglesia.**

**Mi oración es para que esta asamblea sea un recordatorio de que somos más fuertes y más efectivos en nuestro testimonio de Jesucristo cuando somos Iglesia JUNTOS.**

Suyo en Cristo,  
+ Obispo Paul Egensteiner



# welcome:

## PLANNING A DIGITAL ASSEMBLY



Dear Friends in Christ,

It is with great pleasure I welcome you to our **2021 Digital Annual Assembly**. While many of us may have wished to be in-person this year, having a digital assembly will ensure the well-being and safety of all our members and significantly reduce the cost of having an assembly. This past year has taken a toll on us all, financially and emotionally; therefore, it is with great thoughtfulness and consideration that we have planned for and programed our annual assembly.

I hope you will take the time to read the reports in this year's Bulletin of Reports and see the exciting ministries that are happening in and around our Synod, with our ministry partners both here within our synod and Churchwide. Included here are also the biographies of the nominated persons for Synod Council, Consultation Committee and Discipline Committee.

God is surely blessing us as WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER.

We are grateful for the support in making our assembly encompass more than an annual business meeting. **We value our time together as Church at Synod Assembly, and we are expecting to create the same sense of community in our newly-digital world. May we continue to be Church TOGETHER!**

In Christ,  
Liz Hoffmann,  
Assembly Planning Committee Chair

# THE LUTHERAN NEW YORKER

# BEING CHURCH

# *together*



BY **RENÉE WICKLUND**, MNYS VICE-PRESIDENT



For years, I had (choosing my words cautiously) some trouble with an administrator at my son's elementary school. My son requires specialized support, to which he is entitled by law, and I did not think the administrator was taking appropriate steps to coordinate that support. I grumbled quite a bit about this situation. One day, I was doing the grumbling to a friend whose

children attended the same school and also required extra support. My friend heard me out with both sympathy and relevant experience; she said she shared my opinion about the administrator's job performance, and that his sloppiness was detrimental to her children, too. We both complained, until my friend said—

"You know what's difficult, though? He and his family are members of my congregation. I see them at church every week."

Full stop. My friend's reference to seeing the administrator at church brought an instant change in both of our composites. We stopped complaining about his job performance. Instead, I asked my friend whether she knew the administrator's family well, whether his wife also worked locally, where his own children attended school, even whether he enjoyed church-related activities beyond Sunday services. The discussion shifted from a person limited in his job capacity, and the trouble that his work gave us, to a whole person and how we might relate.

**What is it about being church together? I think being church together forces us to see our neighbors as fellow children of our loving God, with the same foibles, shortcomings, and imperfections we ourselves must acknowledge.**

Even as children, many of us heard Jesus' words in Luke 6: "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." That seems straightforward enough: When faced with hate, respond with love. But what about when not faced with hate? What about when faced with annoyance, or inconvenience, or even boredom or tedium? We are all human; we see people every day who rub us the wrong way, and we judge them, like humans are apt to do. She *talks too much*. He *argues all the time*. They have plenty to give but *never offer*. In my experience, breaking bread together, passing the peace, even joining voices in a hymn of praise—these are all shared moments that make judgments harder to sustain. **Worshipping together reminds us that we all reside equally in the Lord's eyes, and that we all fall far short.** Can you spend a homily passing judgment on the sibling to your side? I sure can't.

And the effect is not limited to our fellow congregants, or fellow Lutherans, or fellow Christians. When we spend our time in worship with those for whom, elsewhere, we might feel disdain, we develop a skill set. I used mine last week. An online group in which I participate, founded by one of my law school classmates, was having a discussion about whether the group should, generally, switch to using "they" to describe any individual whose preferred gender pronoun was unknown. I commented against the proposal. I said that the traditionally plural pronoun "they" would be too confusing, because we would not know whether we were speaking of one individual or a group of individuals. I said we should come up with a better, un-gendered pronoun, and then debate whether to make such a change. Within just a few minutes, a



commentator, whom I did not know, fired off several public responses to me. Each one was unkind; he mocked my comment, deliberately mangled my name, and then called me “lazy” and “judgmental.”

I bristled, of course. Quickly, I realized we were not on the same page. I was responding to a suggestion that we begin using “they” as a default; he had understood me to be denying that I would call a person by a pronoun other than “he” or “she,” if requested to do so. I thought about responding to clarify, but reconsidered. What would be the use of that when someone was already flinging insults, and when I, in turn, was perturbed? As Proverbs 15:1 says, “A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”

I decided to find a better use for my iPhone (the device on which this conversation was taking place). I navigated directly to a local charity group, found that a family near me needed a kitchen wastebasket, and messaged that family to ask if I could bring them a new wastebasket the following morning. The family’s response was so prompt, and so joyful, that my own peacefulness returned, and then, almost without being conscious of the change, I was seeing the person who had called me “lazy” and “judgmental” in a more empathetic light. What kind of discrimination, or even hatred, had this person experienced to cause him to respond with aggression and unwarranted assumptions? What pain lay behind his actions?

As I look back on that incident, I realize that what intervened—that is, what prevented me from striking at anger with more anger—was a flash of “church together.” I had a moment of remembering, as I do also when I worship with others, that everything looks different in the light of God’s unwavering acceptance.

*Coming together to worship, and serving others in Jesus’ name, are ways in which we understand our role in creation. If we are called to welcome any person into the pews, to worship, we should also remember that the pews extend, figuratively, beyond the building’s door and out into the world.*

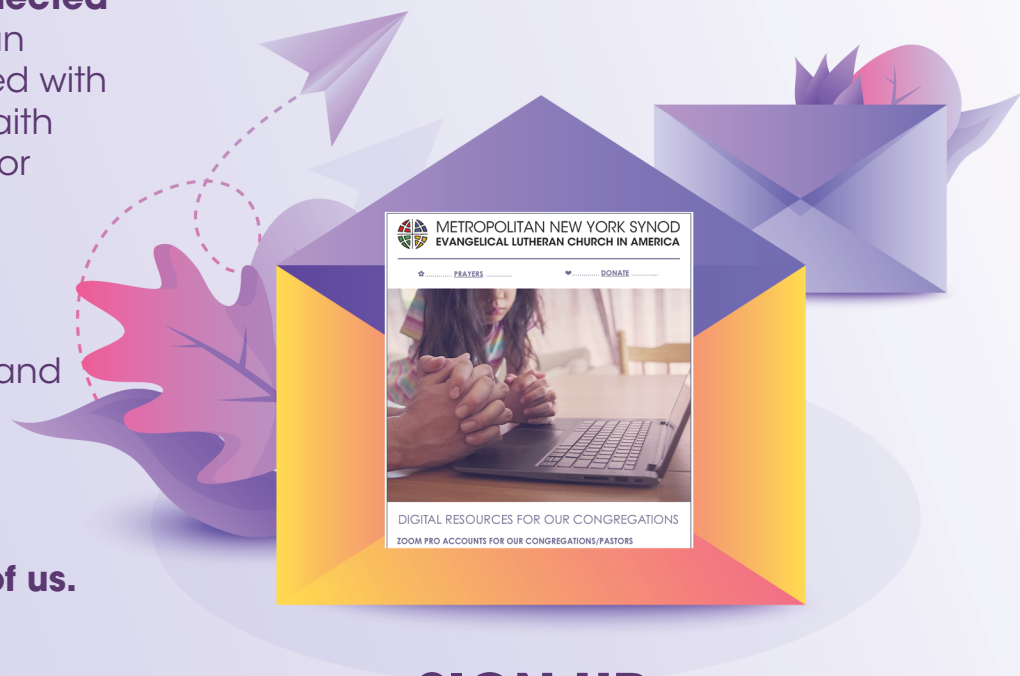
We often sing “They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love.” I believe Peter Scholtes, the author of that hymn, found inspiration in John 13:34-35: “A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all [people] know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Jesus’ message is of the siblinghood of all humanity. **Being church together is how we practice His commands. We create a love that radiates outward.**

# STAY CONNECTED, STAY UPDATED, STAY INFORMED WITH US!

**THE MNYS WEEKLY NEWSLETTER** is an excellent tool to stay **connected** and **informed**. Now, more than ever, we must remain engaged with one another, relevant in our faith communities, and prepared for what lies ahead.

From providing continually updated COVID-related resources, to offering access and information regarding digital synodical events, to raising awareness of congregations' upcoming online events, **MNYS email is here for ALL of us.**

**WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER!**



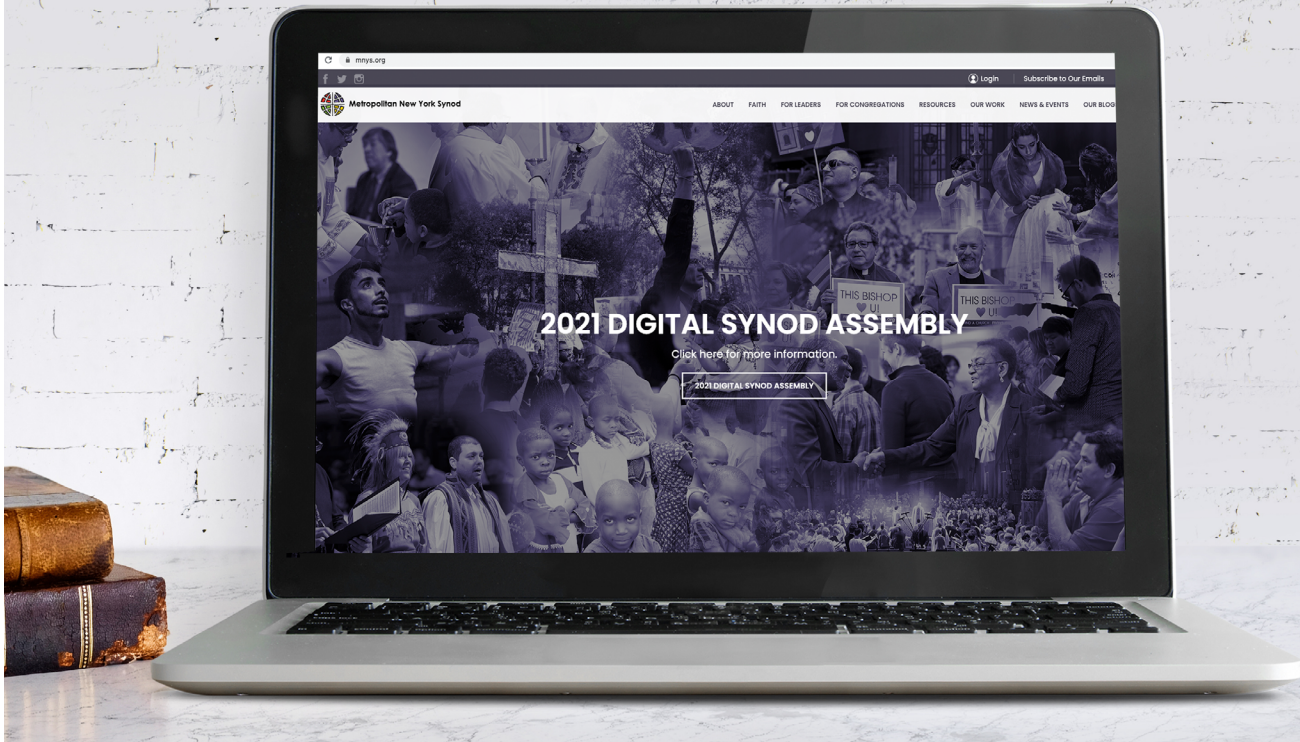
**SIGN UP**

Help us **create awareness** of our email program among your congregation members!

To list your congregation's digital Service of the Word or online event, please send us an email with the pertinent information and links, at [info@mnys.org](mailto:info@mnys.org).



# MNYS 2021 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY REGISTRATION



**The theme for our 2021 Synod Assembly is “We are Church Together.”**

This is the same theme we have been, and will be, using for all our efforts and events during the 2020-21 and 2021-22 program years, and the principle that has helped us to navigate the current crisis as the body of Christ.

The 2021 Synod Assembly will be held  
**Friday, August 20 and Saturday, August 21, online.**

## REGISTRATION LINKS

**Voting Members, Register [HERE](#)**

**Retired Ordained Ministers, Register [HERE](#)**

**Visitors, Register [HERE](#) \***

*\*Visitors who would like to participate in breakout room sessions may register using the above link, which will include a registration fee. Alternatively, if you would like to observe the annual assembly solely, you may tune in to our [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) live streams on the assembly days at no charge.*



# MNYS 2021 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

## NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS FORM

At our 2021 Synod Assembly we will be electing persons to our **Synod Council, Consultation Committee, Discipline Committee, and Churchwide Assembly Voting Members Roster**. Below, you will find both the listing of open seats and a description of the position. We strongly recommend those nominated are familiar with the position, click [here](#) for more information.

### SYNOD COUNCIL COMMITTEE

The Synod Council serves as a board of directors that makes legislative decisions between Synod Assemblies. The Synod Council exercises trusteeship responsibilities, recommends goals and budgets to the assembly, carries out resolutions of the assembly, reviews the official rosters and rostered leaders' statuses, issues calls, as well as supervising the work of committees (S.10).

For a list of positions being filled this year, click [here](#).

### CONSULTATION COMMITTEE

The Consultation Committee consists of twelve persons, of whom six shall be lay and six shall be Ministers of Word and Sacrament/Service, who shall be elected for a term of six years. Members of the Consultation Committee are called to consider matters of adjudication in a congregation. The functions of the Consultation Committee are set forth in Chapter 17 of our synod constitution.

For a list of positions being filled this year, click [here](#).

### DISCIPLINE COMMITTEE

The Committee on Discipline shall consist of twelve persons of whom six shall be ministers of Word and Sacrament/Service, and six shall be lay who shall be elected for a term of six years. The Committee on Discipline shall be responsible for the process of discipline governing officers, ministers of Word and Sacrament, ministers of Word and Service, congregations, and members of congregations in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.


For a list of positions being filled this year, click [here](#).

### 2022 CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY VOTING MEMBERS

The Churchwide Assembly is the highest legislative authority of the churchwide organization. Voting members of the Churchwide Assembly must be a voting member of a congregation of this church elected by the members of the Synod Assembly. The Churchwide Assembly will be held August 8-12, 2022, at Greater Columbus Convention Center, in Columbus, Ohio.

For a list of positions being filled this year, click [here](#).





# MNYS 2021 ANNUAL ASSEMBLY TIMELINE

## June 2021

### June 28:

Deadline for reports to be published in our *Bulletin of Reports - Section B*

- To submit a MNYS internal entity report, click [HERE](#).
- To submit a MNYS Conference report, click [HERE](#).
- To submit a MNYS partner organization report, click [HERE](#).

### June 28:

Deadline for advertisement opportunities. To submit a request, click [HERE](#).

## July 2021

### July 19:

Open nominations period ends.

### July 19:

#### Registration closes.

If paying by check, checks must be received in the Office of the Bishop by this date.

## August 2021

### August 6:

Synod Assembly materials are published

### August 20-21:

Synod Assembly

## Fall 2021

Assembly Planning Committee, Worship Committee, Executive Committee, and Synod Council, analyze and review feedback received after the assembly.

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THANK YOU!

*A photo of the MNYS Digital Chrism Mass Service of the Word.*



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EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA