

**REPORT OF THE  
METRO D.C.  
NEW CONNECTIONS  
CAMPAIGN  
to the  
2018 SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

Christy Hartigan, Director,  
New Connections Campaign



The **New Connections Campaign** is about *growing our church* in the Metro D.C. Synod with stated goals of 3000 New Connections (active participants) and raising \$2.25M.

Why are we doing this? All around us, people who are longing for a deeper connection. We have much to offer in connecting these people with the church. They are people whom God has been preparing to become a part of our congregations and communities. They are looking for a way to explore their faith with others. Can we find a way to connect and invite them into our congregations without it seeming entirely out of context or weird? When they come, will they find a genuine welcome that will help them to feel at home and want to stay? Is there a way they can grow in their faith and become a part of the movement of God through a local Lutheran Church? Are there ways our local Churches can boldly bring new connections to surrounding communities? Many of our congregations have been struggling to make these connections. We must prioritize “connecting with new people”. No one knows precisely how to do this, but together we must try. **We are doing this for the future of the Lutheran church in North America and for the sake of people who, now more than ever, need to know the love, forgiveness, and hope of God.**

We asked our congregations to Join us in the spirit of New Connections committing extra resources and effort into finding new ways to connect and evolve our faith traditions to shape our culture for generations to come. We are *one year* into it, and this is how it is going:

### **GROWING & DEVELOPING CONGREGATIONS**

The New Connections Campaign budget is focused primarily on helping our congregations to grow. We are accomplishing this through Council Visits and Developing Leaders (see below section). The Council visits intend to inform and excite the leaders of the congregations to discern how they currently embrace growth and newly connected people. We asked them to consider what the next three years can look like should they adopt New Connections in the life of their congregation. Since announcing this congregational phase at last year's Synod Assembly, 50 congregations received a Council visit from one of 11 New Connections Campaign-trained Rostered or Lay leaders including Bishop Graham. Of the congregations visited:

- Three congregations have completed the stewardship portion of their New Connections Campaigns. You will hear from the Rev. Gary Rhinesmith from All Saints (Bowie, MD), Rev. Mitch Watney from Good Samaritan (Lexington Park, MD) and Rev Jeanette Leisk (Good Shepherd, Alexandria) talk about their experiences during our New Connections time at Synod Assembly. We celebrate each of these congregations!
- Seven congregations have set one or both goals and are discerning timing to run the stewardship part of their New Connections campaigns.
- Many congregations who received council visits are still discerning their growth direction and how they might run the stewardship portion of the Campaign. Others are moving out on growth ministries, trying something new to develop their people on how to reach out to new connections and learn in the process.

Additionally, we have two congregations running their Campaigns that include growth through New Connections. Good Shepherd (Gaithersburg, MD) is leading our growth goal for the Synod with 300 New Connections! They are committing \$300K towards their growth ministries associated with New Connections! Good Shepherd has also provided \$1500 grants to two of our congregations enabling them to jump-start their growth ministries as they wait for New Connections stewardship monies to flow. Abiding Presence (Burke, VA) has added a goal of 200 New Connections over three years and plans to raise \$225,000 for their growth ministries as part of their annual appeal process.

### DEVELOPING LEADERS

We believe that when our leaders make connecting with new people a priority and they begin to pray and plan for that to happen, God WILL bring the growth. Thus, developing our leaders in specific engagement (E-Vent) and Stewardship best practices has been our focus. Specifically,

- **Stewardship & Campaign Best Practices Training:** We trained 81 congregational lay and rostered leaders from 24 congregations in stewardship best practices for running a campaign in their congregations. The New Connections team held three training events with content delivered from the Rev. Mike Ward. We received many compliments about this training such as,
- **E-Vent Training:** 171 congregational leaders from 54 congregations have been trained in Engagement (Evangelism) best practices in our E-Vent training. Training topics included Holding Spiritual Conversations, Welcome in and Hold On (to new people), BLESS and Growing Young.

"The stewardship and campaign training is practical and easy to follow – I know I will use it at my church. It was well- worth 2 1/2 hours of my time!"

- **Intentional Impact training:** We trained 14 Rostered leaders in Cohort 1. Cohort 2 is currently in progress which includes 26 Rostered and 2 lay leaders. On a macro-level, Intentional Impact is about growing leaders to begin new Missional communities. On a micro-level. It is about learning how to build leaders, implement a model that develops leaders who develop other leaders, and so on such that we ultimately grow the church. This is an eight-month commitment and includes goal-setting and coaching to help achieve goals.
- **Coaching:** We trained over 21 coaches who are active in coaching relationships with 43 rostered and lay leaders. Thanks to Rev. Dr. Nathan Swenson-Reinhold's leadership and vision for this Synod-wide coaching program. It is taking root, and we hope that coaching will become a bedrock of our Synod's growth and development culture. New Connections is extending coaching to small groups (e.g., church councils) to help discern growth ministry, set goals and take steps to achieve them. Ultimately we employ coaching to help leaders lead their congregations towards growth. For more information go to MetroDC Coaching website: [MetroDC ELCA Coaches](#)

**Highlight: "BLESS"**  
Two of our congregations are moving out with their growth ministries and using this material. Lutheran Church of the Covenant (Dale City) and Holy Cross (Herndon), under the leadership of Rev. Darcy Tillman and Rev. Margrethe Kleiber respectively, collaborated to create and preach a sermon series on BLESS (Bridge, Listen, Eat, Serve, Share). They incorporated activities each week with each letter.

## NEW STARTS

New Connections embraces planting new ministries. Thus, "New Starts" includes new worship services, new discipleship groups and new congregations (starting out of existing ones as second sites). Funds are used for program development, not for buying new buildings. We delight in the progress of our three New Starts over the past year:

1. Swahili Lutheran Church worships weekly at Living Faith Lutheran in Rockville MD. They have 185 people connected to the ministry.
2. Mosaic Region Ministry with the Rev. Mike Gutzler at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Falls Church, VA. They have begun weekly worship at the movie theater.
3. King of Kings in Fairfax has just (last Sunday, June 10th!) moved ahead with plans to start a second campus in Loudon County with a candidate/developer.

**SUPPORT GROWTH ACROSS THE ELCA**

Because we are a community of believers, we recognize a need to join in the work of our brothers and sisters across the country. 10% of our fundraising monies received will be directed to the ELCA to further God's work beyond our synod. To date, we have given \$22,623 to the Campaign for the ELCA.

**FINANCIALS**

Our over-arching goal is to raise \$2.25M over three years. We dedicate 100% percent to our four campaign thrusts (Growing Congregations, Developing Leaders, Establishing New Starts and Tithing to ELCA church-wide growth ministry). As of May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2018, we report the following:

We celebrate 129 gifts thus far most of which are recurring over a 3-5 year timeframe. Also, we have eight congregations who have made growth goal commitments (see outstanding "internal pledges" line item below).

	ACTUAL			
	2014-16FY	2017FY	2018FY	Total to Date
			Feb-May	
<b>70100 · New Connections Income</b>				
<b>70110 · New Connections Program Contribs.</b>	124,124.32	169,296.00	24,589.97	318,010.29
<b>Pledge Activity</b>				
<b>Outstanding Cash Pledges</b>				219,224.99
<b>Good Sam pledges not yet in RP</b>				41,416.00
<b>Outstanding "Internal" Pledges</b>				723,763.00
<b>Total Program Contributions</b>	124,124.32	169,296.00	24,589.97	1,302,414.28
<b>70115 · New Connections Bethany Exp. Support</b>	82,255.12	117,889.48	31,987.73	232,132.33
<b>Total 70100 · New Connections Income</b>	<b>206,379.44</b>	<b>287,185.48</b>	<b>56,577.70</b>	<b>1,534,546.61</b>
<b>80100 · New Connections Expense (Bethany)</b>				
<b>Total 80110 · New Connections Administration</b>	82,255.12	117,889.48	31,987.73	232,132.33
<b>(Paid through Bethany)</b>				
<b>80200 · New Connections Programs</b>				
<b>80210 · NC - New Ministry Starts</b>	1,955.93	29,600.00	11,322.84	42,878.77
<b>80215 · NC - Reviving Congregations</b>		20,000.00	1,061.69	21,061.69
<b>80220 · NC - Leadership/Coaching</b>		14,728.96	10,105.64	24,834.60
<b>80225 · NC - Gifts to ELCA Campaign</b>		21,041.76	1,581.47	22,623.23
<b>Total 80200 · New Connections Programs</b>	1,955.93	85,370.72	24,071.64	111,398.29
<b>NET ACTIVITY</b>	<b>122,168.39</b>	<b>83,925.28</b>	<b>518.33</b>	<b>1,191,015.99</b>

## WHAT'S WORKING?

Our congregations engaging in New Connections have demonstrated incredible willingness to explore and try something new around growth ministry! Many are finding the E-vent material easy to incorporate. Some are adding "radical hospitality" to their Sunday morning and special events. Others are using the BLESS material both inside and outside their congregations. Also, we have a few that are inviting congregation members to participate in building their 100-word faith statements so that when they go out into the "world," and an opportunity occurs, they have their statement "on the ready." Finally, some of our congregations are focusing on diversity and inclusion of the people geographically near their churches. They are exploring how to be a part of their lives in the context of community. They are seeking how to mature relationships to the point of inviting them into and incorporating them into the ministry life of the congregation.

Leaders and pastors are learning how to raise funds for the growth ministries they want using the excellent training provided by the Rev. Mike Ward.

## WHAT CHALLENGES HAVE WE OVERCOME?

We quickly realized we needed more input to help us figure out some of the complicated aspects of the Campaign we established the New Connections Strategy Team. Thank you to the Revs. Jennifer Leisk, Dave Sonnenburg, Scott Zimmerer, Rebbeka Kolowe, Mark Olson, Phil Hirsch and Ms. Kristen Kane and Ms. Katharyn Wheeler. Topics explored included the definition of a New Connection and how to set up money-flow in such a way that further embraces our partnership with congregations.

Defining a New Connection proved to be challenging as just about everyone asked had a nuanced and different description. We came to an agreement that there are three phases for a New Connection to become an *Active Participant*:

- (1) Reach Out Phase - through invitation whether in person, on social media or through an intentional outreach event, look for seems where congregation members interact with the community. Interactions may include a local community service day (e.g., Christmas in April, God's Work Our Hands), food drive or homeless lunch drops, community yard sales and inter-faith discussion groups.
- (2) Welcome in Phase - "Come and See" events draw people into the life of the congregation. Trained greeters genuinely welcome newcomers, pastors personally introduce themselves to newcomers, follow up is key in this phase.
- (3) Hang On Phase - Actively help newcomers build friendships with others in the congregations and find signs of how they might like to give back to the community. Identify their gifts and integrate them into existing ministry or build a new one. When a person comes back at least twice after their initial visit, and they participate in at least one ministry, they are considered an active participant.

Given the cycle time of Council business, we found a much lengthier timeline for making decisions and goals than we anticipated. Thus, we found we needed to meet with either whole councils or a smaller group to accommodate Council member turnover and more complex situations. We celebrate each encounter as one step closer to growing God’s kingdom and bringing people to know God’s enduring love and grace. Our team held true to “meeting our congregations and their Leadership where they are” and being a partner in exploring growth ministry and setting goals.

**We are at the end of year one. We encourage all to participate in year two. We cannot wait to see what the Holy Spirit has in store as we imagine and experience the real fruit of this program: connecting more people with God’s love and growing diverse congregations. Let’s try it together and share our stories!**

