

## Report of the Director for Evangelical Mission

The Rev. Dr. Philip C. Hirsch, Assistant to the Bishop

On a regular basis, I meet with the Synod Council and I serve on Candidacy, Finance, New and Renewing Mission Table and the Stewardship and Mission Support Table of our Synod.

This year the bulk of my efforts have focused on developing The New Connections Campaign.

In 2016, the Bishop and Synod Council set a goal of increasing the total number of active participants in our congregations by 3,000 across our Synod and to raise \$2,225,000 for that purpose. The statistics of decline (see far below) do not define us, the gospel of Jesus Christ is needed more than ever. May the Holy Spirit continue to guide and inspire our efforts! I am grateful to Christy Hartigan who is our Campaign Director and to Pastor Mike Ward who is our consultant.

We hope to briefly visit every Church Council this fall (2017) to introduce the idea and encourage everyone to set a goal to grow with God's help and a financial goal to support that effort. At assembly, we will ask for a date when a 30 minute visit could occur.

Every congregation will be encouraged to appoint someone to organize the Evangelism and Stewardship efforts (if not done already). Training will be provided as follows:

- a. Evangelism Workshop (E-Vent) Will be on Saturday, September 16 10am-12pm at Christ the King Lutheran Church in Great Falls, VA.
- b. Stewardship Workshop was led by Clif Christopher who wrote "Not Your Parents Offering Plate" in April of 2017. The new connections campaign will have training for every congregation to learn the best practices of financial development (dates to be announced soon).

### Coaching

The Rev. Dr. Nathan Swenson-Reinhold is the new Coaching Coordinator for our Synod. He brings enthusiasm and years of experience to training leaders in learning how to create a culture of coaching the best in others. The goal is for every pastor, council and leader who wants a coach in our synod to have one. I am grateful for Nathan's willingness to share his gifts and experience with other leaders in our synod, thank you! To date he has helped train 17 coaches who have begun coaching others in our Synod!

If we are successful at reaching new people, our congregations will become younger and more diverse. We will need strategies for both these efforts. One place to start is with recommendations from the Fuller Youth Institute called Growing Young. We will be leading a workshop on the Friday of Assembly on the findings that can help any

congregation become better at connecting with 15-29 year olds. This “young adult” emphasis is not new to our Synod but is not fully realized either.

Diversity is a reality in the kingdom of God but still alludes our congregations. The Racial Equity Team is doing important work to help everyone understand what is needed. We will also need to look at churches that have become authentically multi-cultural and learn from them. This fall I hope to bring a group of leaders from our synod to the largest gathering of multi-cultural churches in the world so we learn from what they are doing.

A look at state of our congregations below is an important reminder as to why this is the time for our Synod to put our resources and energies into finding ways to connect with new people and fulfill the great commission by making disciples.

This is a report of the state of the congregations in our Synod:

There are 74 Communities of Faith (71 Congregations + 3 SAWCs Synodically Authorized Worshipping Community)

16 Growing (or over 200 in worship and stable)  
33 Stable (>50 in worship, few signs of impending financial peril)  
25 Declining or small (<50 in worship, cannot fully fund a FT pastor)

25 report less than 50 in average worship attendance:  
12 have part time pastors and many of the remaining 13, significantly underpay their full time staff.

2 are re-building sanctuaries and will need significant redevelopment of the congregations  
St. Matthew's in DC  
Christ in Bethesda, MD

I would like to acknowledge and thank The Rev. Anteneh Gebreselassie, Coordinator for African National Ministries and The Rev. Shannon Anderson who served in 2016 as the program associate for supported congregations. I am also grateful for the work of The Rev. Joe Vought, The Rev. Jeanette Leisk and the members of the New and Renewing Missions and the Stewardship and Mission Support Tables for their faithful work and joyful partnership.

Thank you especially to my co-workers in the Synod Office: Bishop Dick Graham, The Rev. Leila Ortiz, The Rev. Tom Knoll, Katharyn Wheeler, Christy Hardigan, Makoura Kone and Karen Kruger.

In Christ,  
Pastor Philip C. Hirsch