

## Upstate New York Synod, ELCA

### Reflections and Highlights from the 2022 Assembly—by Tamara Lipke



It was an honor and privilege to represent Incarnate Word at our Synod Assembly on June 5-6, 2022, once again. This year's assembly was one to celebrate as we returned to an in-person event at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center. Attending the Assembly is a way to learn and feel the connection to the larger Church of which we are a part. We worshiped, voted on the business of the church, elected new Synod Council members and delegates to attend the Churchwide Assembly, and received updates on the mission work of the local and larger Church. The theme of the assembly was "Cultivating a G.R.A.C.E. Mindset\*: **Generous Love**." This is the first of the discipleship practices that Bishop Miller has focused on this year. The theme permeated our worship opportunities and the updates on the work occurring throughout the Church.

Importantly, we were challenged to think about God's love and calling and to be moved to action as servants of God and her Church in our communities. In sermons, presentations and reports, there were provocative questions posed and ideas imparted that I have pondered since the Assembly. I share some of them with you here for your reflection too.

- Bishop Miller reminded us that "we are an immigrant church." And, challenged us to answer this question, "What will your congregation do in the coming year to eradicate racism and a white supremacist worldview?"
- Rev. Kimberly Vaughn acknowledged that, "The world is on fire!" And she asked us, "What do we have to say about it as a child of God?"
- The Gender Task Force reminded me of the importance of Incarnate Word's role as a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) church in collaboration with and member of a Reconciling in Christ Synod.
- The Racial Justice Task Force gave a moving presentation on their work this year that included naming the 10 people murdered and three people injured in the Tops Buffalo Hate Crime. The Task Force prepared a statement of challenge\*\*.
- And finally, Rev. Imani Olear closed our Assembly with the question, "What's so good about Jesus that everyone needs to know?" and with the powerful thought, "The Church exists primarily for those who are still outside it."

We voted on the 2023 Mission Budget Proposal and Memorials and Resolutions to change the Church as it and the world continue to change. The work of Synod Council to address the shortage of ministers included a memorial on concurrent calling of Pastors by more than one congregation that can now be forwarded to the ELCA Church Council. The Assembly voted to direct the Synod Council to respond to the opioid crisis by creating a Synod Task Force on Addiction to advise how synod leaders and congregations can collaborate and form effective partnerships with state and local authorities and nongovernmental organizations. The criteria for election as Conference Dean was also acted upon during the business portion of the meeting.

There were several connections to Incarnate Word! Tom Madden skillfully led us through the proceedings and was re-elected to another four-year term as Synod Vice President! Lisa Frauens filled important roles before and during the Assembly. Joanne Lembach, Chair of the Synod Assembly Planning team, did an amazing job planning an experience that we learned and benefitted from. Joanne was recognized for her dedication to the work of the Church through the Synodical Discipleship Award. Congratulations on this well-deserved recognition, Joanne! I am grateful to the congregation for the opportunity to represent Incarnate Word at Synod Assembly!

**\*G.R.A.C.E. Mindset**

*Generous Love, Restorative Justice, Adaptive Leadership, Collaboration, Experimentation*

**\*\*2022 UNYS Racial Task Force**

**Statement of Challenge:**

*Howard Thurman – “Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and go do it. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”*

*The members of the USNY Synod Racial Justice Task Force stand against all intentions and actions of racism and make a commitment to learning, being and taking action to be better allies to our siblings of the BIPOC and LGBTQIA Communities.*

*We call you to join in this work as pastors, seminarians, SAMs, lay leaders, churches, and individuals...to be resurrected and come alive to God’s calling on behalf of those whose lives have been lost, harmed, and oppressed by the violence and hatred that is racism.*

*As we make this resurrection promise and present this statement to the USNY Synod leadership, churches, and individuals as a call to action to dismantle racism in our church and the world.*