BISHOP’S RECONCILIATION TEAM
REPORT TO 2015 ASSEMBLY

Seeking to enhance the capability of the churches of Upper Susquehanna Synod to approach conflict as an opportunity for growth, this past year the Reconciliation Team sponsored a Mediation Skills Training Institute at St. Luke’s Lutheran Church, Bloomsburg. The members of the Reconciliation Team were joined by pastors, lay leaders, bishops and other judicatory leaders for a week-long training. Participants came from New York, West Virginia and New Jersey including Presbyterians, Episcopalians, members of the United Church of Christ and United Methodists as well as Lutherans. Richard Blackburn of the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center led the training.

As a result of this training, the synod is better equipped to be strengthened through conflict. There are more people in the synod trained in conflict management which is helpful. The Reconciliation Team has learned a great deal and has more productive resources available.

Throughout the year the Team has walked with several congregations in conflict. We continue to do so. As a result of the institute, however, the team is available to lead congregations in workshops for Conflict Transformation Skills. This one or two-day workshop aims to improve a congregation’s ability to transform conflict constructively. Conflict transformations is still a relatively young field, so we find ourselves always learning, adapting and changing. We invite congregations to engage in that learning process with us. Our hope is that congregations and leaders will come to a healthy understanding of conflict so that the mission of Christ can be strengthened in congregations even in the midst of differences and struggles.

In another setting and format in this assembly and beyond, you will have the opportunity to become familiar with the Reconciliation Team’s list of indicators that a congregation, pastor or lay leader may want to call the Reconciliation Team. The earlier congregation conflict can be addressed the better. So, here is one good signal: If you say to yourself, “I wonder if we should call the Bishop’s Reconciliation Team?” then you should! You can initiate a conversation by calling Bishop Driesen at the synod office or the chair of the team, The Rev. James Park Bricker, 717 512-1026, gymbri@embarqmail.com.

I have one other request of you. We would appreciate your prayers. Our work is difficult and important. We need your support.

The members of the Bishop’s Reconciliation Team are: Bishop Driesen, Pastors Bricker, Cheryl Berner, David Byerly, Erwin Roux, and Gary Roth; and Dottie Anderson, George Jansson, Ken Roush and Meghan Weaver.