

2016-2017 Report of the Director of Communications

As the part-time Director of Communications for the Upper Susquehanna Synod, I've continued this year to promote a positive image of the synod through comprehensive communications. As in the past, this has been done in a variety of ways:

Publications: There are four main publications that I edit and distribute.

- *USS Ark* is the monthly print newsletter that contains information about congregational mission and ministry projects. *USS Ark* is a one page, two-sided camera-ready newsletter that can be printed in church bulletins and newsletters as well as a "cut and paste" list of upcoming events in the synod. There are three versions of this publication: a PDF file, a Word file, and the content is in the e-mail through which it is distributed. News stories from the *USS Ark* are also posted on our website and shared through social media. This year, this publication highlighted the following:
 - Synod Profile for the Bishop Election
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 - Lutheran/Roman Catholic Dialogue
 - Synod Assembly
 - Retirement Celebration for Bishop Driesen
 - Bishop Collins Takes Over and Names Assistant
 - "God's work. Our hands." Day of Service
 - Bishop and Synod Staff Installation
 - Campus Ministry
 - Seafarers Collection
 - Outdoor Ministry
 - Features on our congregations, including small snippets of what congregations were doing, called *Up and Down the Valleys*.
- *Headwaters* is newsletter for rostered and other leaders of the synod, which comes out nearly monthly. It contains information about them and for them, including continuing education opportunities. This publication was redesigned in late 2016 and now features information from the deans' meetings and other concerns for leaders.
- *USS-ELCA.ORG* is the synod's website. It is updated with information constantly and seeks to serve as a resource for congregations, rostered leaders, and individuals. The website was redesigned in early 2017 and unveiled in early March.

News Releases: These are pieces sent to the local news media to promote events or newsworthy activities. This year, news releases were sent about the following: Synod Assembly Recap and Bishop Collins' Installation.

Education: Often, educational opportunities are offered about communications topics including workshops at synod assembly, freestanding programs, consultations with various groups, or as Also, subjects of our publications. This year, no education sessions were held as part of my position.

Social Media: Our social network presence is through a synod blog, a Twitter account (@usselca), and Facebook (www.facebook.com/usselca). The blog is used to share news features, devotional writings, and other "columns." Twitter was used to do live tweeting (using a specific hashtag) at Synod Assembly. The goal of our Facebook postings is to use Facebook to engage and connect members of USS congregations by doing the following:

- Steer people to information or news on our website
- Share new information for our Facebook fans that is current and relevant
- Increase understanding of what we as a synod do and what resources are available
- Get feedback on a particular topic or event
- Uplift the positive news found in other media about our pastors and congregations

As part of the new website redesign, the blog is now hosted on the synod website and in 2017, synod staff will be regularly blogging. As part of my position, I also attend the deans' meetings and synod council meetings regularly and serve as the convener of the Campus Ministry Team. Also in early 2017, I now also do some bookkeeping functions for the synod, writing and distributing checks after entering invoices into our accounting system. This was part of a staff restructuring that took place at the beginning of the year.

Chad Hershberger, Director of Communications