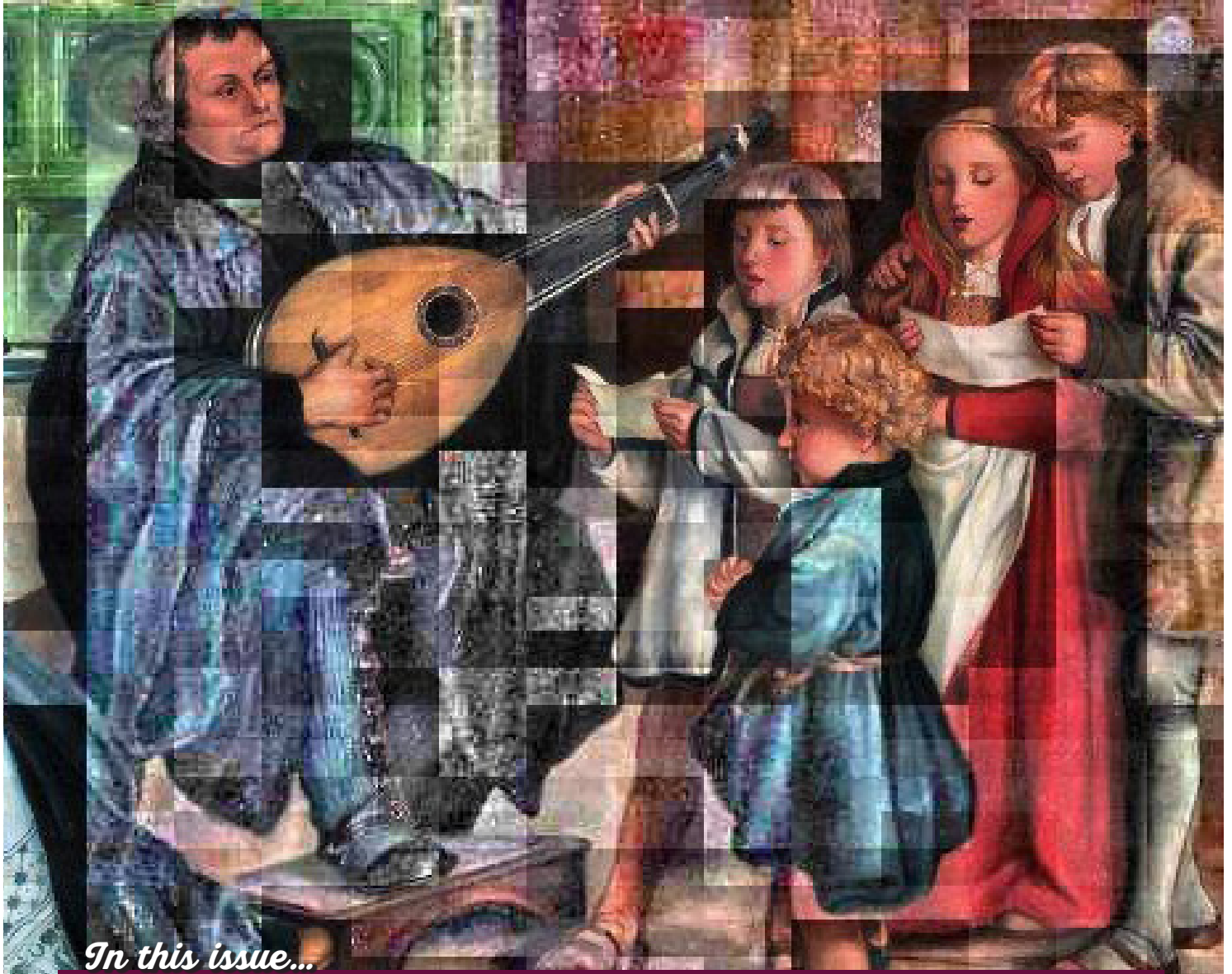


Wayfarer

STORIES FROM THE ROAD.



In this issue...

MADAGASCAR
RELIEF FUND

p. 3

REFORMATION
HYMNODY: A GIFT
FOR ALL TIME

p. 5

MINISTRY
ACROSS
DENOMINATIONS

p. 9



**SOUTHWESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA
SYNOD**
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH IN AMERICA

MISSION:

TO SERVE, CONNECT,
AND EQUIP ELCA
CONGREGATIONS
IN SOUTHWESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA TO TELL
THE STORY OF JESUS



CONTACT:

1014 PERRY HWY, SUITE 200
PITTSBURGH, PA 15237

412-367-8222
WWW.SWPASYNOD.ORG

BISHOP & ASSISTANTS

kurt.kusserow@swpasynod.org
peter.asplin@swpasynod.org
melissa.stoller@elca.org

RESOURCE MINISTRY

beth.caywood@swpasynod.org

ACCOUNTING

bob.cairns@swpasynod.org

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

sandy.delorenze@swpasynod.org
carol.ruckert@swpasynod.org

COMMUNICATIONS

lauren.wolcott@swpasynod.org

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 02 *The Global Church*
- 04 *iServe*
- 05 *Reformation Hymnody*
- 07 *The Power of Data*
- 08 *Meeting Our Neighbors Grants*
- 09 *Ministry Across Denominations*
- 11 *Health & Wellness Ministry*
- 12 *Eating Again at the Table*
- 13 *Staff Book Picks that Inspire*
- 14 *Colleague Connections*
- 15 *Calendar of Causes*

SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD

Rev. Kurt F. Kusserow
BISHOP

Barbara Nugent
VICE-PRESIDENT

Rev. William Schaefer
SECRETARY

Gary N. Teti
TREASURER

Rev. Peter D. Asplin
ASSISTANT TO THE BISHOP

Rev. Melissa L. Stoller
DIRECTOR FOR EVANGELICAL MISSION
& ASSISTANT TO THE BISHOP

Deacon Elizabeth Caywood
RESOURCE MINISTRY DIRECTOR

SYNOD COUNCIL

Jennifer Armstrong-Schaefer

Rev. James V. Arter III

Rev. Kerri L. Clark

Rev. Beth Clementson

Dr. Wendy Farone

Myra L. Fozard

Beryl Gundy

Rev. Brenda Henry

Rev. Susan A. G. Irons

Rev. Allyn Itterly

Janice Jeletic

Dennis T. Lane

Fiona Lubold

Rev. J.J. Lynn

Rev. Sarah Rossing

Linda Schaeffer

Holly Schmitt

Amy J. Schultz

Kelly Spaninger



THE GLOBAL CHURCH

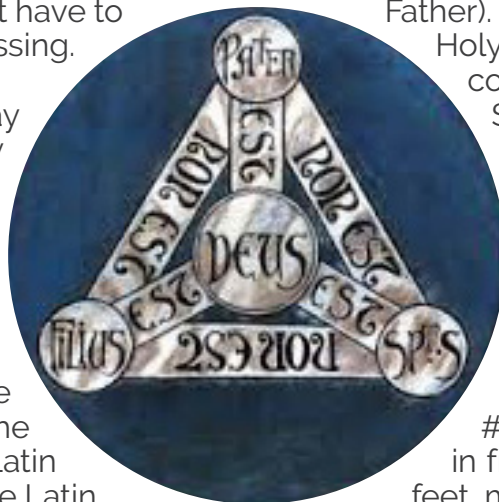


Bishop Kurt F. Kusserow
 Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Bishop
 kurt.kusserow@swpasynod.org | 412-367-8222

If your bookshelf is like mine, among your books are little treasures that remind you of places you have been and people you have met. One treasure on my bookshelf is a 41-year-old candle. I have never lit it because I do not want to melt away the image molded into its side: "CONFESSIO AUGUSTANA 1530 – 1980." It comes from Augsburg, Germany, from the celebration of the 450th anniversary of the Augsburg Confession which I attended with my family on our way home from furlough that year.

But when I ponder the treasures of the Global Church in our shared exercise of the faith, it becomes clear that we don't have to travel far to receive their blessing.

Sit with me on Sunday morning. Just as the liturgy begins we hear, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," which reminds us of the stained glass window that pictures a triangle with a circle at each point and one more circle in the center of the triangle. Each circle has a Latin word in it, and there are more Latin words written along the straight edges of the image. We read little sentences like,



Filius est Deus, (the Son is God) and *Spiritus Sanctus non est Pater*, (the Spirit is not the Father). This compact logic of the Holy Trinity presented as a graphic comes from North Africa, where St. Augustine was bishop many, many years ago.

We stand to welcome the Gospel in song, but we leave the hymnal in the pew because we know this acclamation by heart: "Halle, halle, halle – lu – jah!" (ELW #171) Our fingers tap the pew in front of us to the beat and our feet move around a little. This is from the Caribbean, much closer to us both in geography and in time.

The sermon hymn is another favorite, *Children of the Heavenly Father*. It's from Sweden, and is less than 100 years old. But as soon as we finish that relatively new, Nordic song, we begin to recite the creed, written nearly 1,700 years ago in Greece. It's the Nicene Creed, which takes its name from the place where it was written, the ancient city of Nicaea, which is now called Nikaia, and is effectively a suburb of Athens.

This Sunday happens to be a donation day for the food bank, so the chancel is filled with grocery bags and packaged diapers. The committee chair has been asked to bless the items collected and pray for those who will receive them. She turns to the collection of prayers in the front of the hymnal and prays, "Make us worthy, Lord, to serve our fellow human beings throughout the world who live and die in poverty and hunger. Give them through our hands this day their daily bread, and by our understanding love, give peace and joy. Amen." The prayer is from India, from the lifelong work of Mother Teresa.

While it is true that each local congregation is fully the Church in its life and ministry, not one of our congregations could even begin to accomplish its purpose without using the bounty of treasures that come from the Global Church. Many of these treasures are so familiar that we have forgotten that they come as gifts from others around the world.

A particular treasure that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has been able to give is the freedom of global travel that U.S. citizens enjoy. We have used that gift to visit our companion synod in Madagascar several times. Right now, our synod is providing a financial gift for the relief and support of our companion synod and for the seminary in Bezaha.

We are part of a Global Church in which each local community blesses all the others with the treasures it has to give. 💧

MADAGASCAR RELIEF FUND

Our companion synod is suffering from a protracted drought. Are you able to help provide relief and support?

Southwestern Pennsylvania enjoys an abundance of water. Besides the three rivers that flow through our principle city, we rely on the Youghiogheny, Kiskiminetas, Beaver, Connoquenessing and Loyalhanna Rivers and many smaller creeks to sustain our life. Can you imagine if a strong storm suddenly changed the course of your local run so that it no longer supplied the water you depend on?

This happened in southern Madagascar. The Lutheran seminary in Bezaha was once surrounded by rice fields, fed by a canal that connected to the Taheza River. But when a cyclone changed the course of the river, the rice fields dried up. Continued drought and famine have left the seminary faculty and students in dire straits.

Our Synod Council has authorized an appeal to raise funds to provide relief and support for Madagascar, especially for the seminary, but also for any other pressing needs the Tulear Synod has. We have sent an initial \$5,000 from synod funds and are matching gifts from our members and congregations raised this summer up to another \$5,000.

Along with this fund raising effort, we hope to do some "friend raising" as well – to strengthen our synod's relationship with our fellow Lutherans in Madagascar. When you send in your gift of support, let us know if you or your congregation would also like to be part of the "friend raising" effort. Together we can make a difference!

DONATE AT:
[SWPASYNOD.ORG/MADAGASCAR](https://swpasynod.org/madagascar)



iSERVE STAY AT HOME MISSION WORK CAMP (IN A BOX)



Pastor Christina Hough

Director of Spiritual Care and Community Liaison, Glade Run Lutheran Services
chough@gladerun.org | 724-452-4453, ext. 1150

Since 2008, the Stay at Home Mission Work Camp (SHMWC) has gathered youth and adults from across the synod the end of June to partner with local congregations, agencies, and ministries to help their neighbors in need. SHMWC has helped over a hundred low income and elderly families and a dozen or more community services and ministries. SHMWC's mission, from the very first summer, is to provide an opportunity for youth and adults to serve their neighbors.

Like so many other camps, events, and youth programming, Covid-19 meant no SHMWC for the summer of 2020 and an uncertain future. As the pandemic surged in the fall and winter, leadership wondered if a camp in 2021 was even possible; there were still so many unknowns and uncertainties.

A year of pause gave everyone an opportunity to rethink, retool, and reevaluate our ministries. Committed to the mission of SHMWC as well as to the people and communities, we knew the work of SHMWC needed to continue. Determined not to miss another summer, the leadership began to reimagine a SHMWC that would be safe as we continue to live through the pandemic by offering virtual, hybrid, and asynchronous components. Congregations had the opportunity to participate in a live three-day day camp, join virtually, or participate as their schedule allowed.

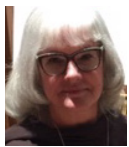
iServe takes the original mission one step further by equipping and empowering congregations to serve right in their own neighborhoods, and tailoring support based on their needs to make serving the community easy. Our team has used their years of experience running local mission trips. Can't join live? Not a problem! Need help finding a service project for your group? We can help! Need tools, supplies, and resources? We can help with that too! Each kit contains devotions, tips, resources, and treats.

It is not too late to get a box and serve your neighbors. This new model means there are opportunities all year long and we are here to help! To learn more about the box and a have free consultation, or to learn how your congregation or small group can be a part of iServe: Stay at Home Mission Work Camp (in a box), please email Pastor Chris Hough. 💧



REFORMATION HYMNODY

A GIFT FOR ALL TIME



Sister Cynthia Pock, n/OLF, AAGO

Cantor at First English Lutheran Church, Downtown
cantor@flcpittsburgh.org | 412-471-8125

When Martin Luther (1483–1546) posted his 95 theses on the Wittenberg church door in 1517, he had no intention of forming an entirely new denomination. The Reformation changed the function and style of church music significantly. It was Luther, himself a lover of music, an accomplished singer, and skilled composer who enthusiastically encouraged such modifications.

For over 800 years, Latin Gregorian chant was the prevailing style of church music. Most Germans knew no Latin; congregational participation therefore was impossible. Observing the clergy conducting liturgy was the norm. When the Reformation occurred, changes in the role and style of sacred music evolved. Sixteenth-century Germans would attempt to understand the true meaning of the Gospel in their own tongue.

Church music of the time reflected Luther's position on the subject. He viewed music as a gift from God and a vehicle to proclaim the Gospel. He desired music to be a teaching tool and a way for individuals to keep the Word in their hearts and minds.

Luther's view gave direction to the use of music in Lutheran worship. In the matter of liturgy, he was not a revolutionary reformer. He retained the best of traditional forms that did not contradict his view of the Gospel. He believed worship in the vernacular was essential; people should understand the texts in liturgy and be able to sing them.

Large congregations in urban settings used Latin liturgy (*Formula Missae et Communionis*), Gregorian chant, and polyphonic music; simpler music in German (*Deutsche Messe*) served for smaller, rural parishes.

The *Choral* (in English, "chorale") or *Kirchenleid* (church song) is the most significant musical contribution of the Lutheran Reformation. Chorale melodies included updated folksongs and newly composed tunes. Luther created new texts which people could learn and retain easily, as many were illiterate and printed books were scarce. Chorales were intended for unison singing, without harmony or accompaniment, unlike four-part hymnody in current hymnals. Musicians frequently adapted secular tunes for sacred purposes in the 16th century. Luther often re-worked common tunes of the day for chorale use, but there is no evidence that he used "drinking songs," contrary to popular myth.

Martin Luther wrote 38 hymns, as well as paraphrases of the Mass and of psalms. He composed chorales for Sundays of

the liturgical year, the catechism, the creed, baptism, and Holy Communion. He collaborated with Johann Walter (1496-1570), and many hymns were published in Walter's volume *Geystliche gesangk Buchleyn* (1524).

Luther's best-known hymn text, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God*, is a paraphrase of Psalm 46. The tune is ascribed to him, but possibly existed from an earlier era. *Savior of the Nations, Come* ('*Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland*) is reworked from the Gregorian hymn *Veni redemptor gentium*. *To God the Holy Spirit Let Us Pray* (*Nun bitten wir den heiligen Geist*) is based upon the chant *Veni Sancte Spiritus*. *We All Believe in One True God* (*Wir glauben all an einen Gott*) uses a Latin credo tune from 1300. Luther wrote the 15-stanza text and original melody for *From Heaven Above to Earth I Come* (*Vom Himmel hoch, da komm ich her*) the well-loved Christmas hymn, in which the voice of an angel depicts Jesus' birth.

Lutheran Reformation hymns were stunningly popular; hymnwriters and composers created new church songs at a rapid pace. The printing press aided the distribution of hymnody. Johann Walter was the first Lutheran *kantor*, and was an advisor and colleague of Martin Luther. He desired that a holy and proper use of music in worship prevail in German churches. A poet as well as composer, Walter produced a lengthy, rhymed poem of 324 lines which describe his view of music's importance in liturgy.

*"That such unmerited free grace (which God
from love for all our race
Had promised in His word) might be kept
fresh in human memory
And move the heart to high delight in praising
God both day and night –
This is the weightiest reason why God music
did at once supply...
I have just named the reason why God gave
us music from on high.
These reasons teach us we must use the gift
from heaven as God would choose:
By it let God be glorified; then let it be our
help and guide.*

Many hymns by influential Reformation hymnwriters have stood the test of time. Protestants found comfort in such hymns during times of persecution following the Reformation. Texts proclaim Gospel truths, express devotion and trust in God's care. Reformation-era hymnwriters include Paul Speratus, Paul Eber, Justus Jonas (colleagues of Luther), as well as significant women poets including Elizabeth Cruciger, Elizabeth of Brunswick, and Ursula von Munsterberg.

As an example, Speratus wrote *Salvation Unto Us Has Come* from a prison cell, as he had upheld Lutheran teachings to the scorn of some. His personal theology is revealed in stanzas such as:

*"Faith clings to Jesus' cross alone and rests in
him unceasing;
And by its fruits true faith is known, with love
and hope increasing.
For faith alone can justify; works serve our
neighbor and supply the proof that faith is
living."*

Paul Eber, professor of Hebrew at Wittenberg penned *When in the Hour of Utmost Need*, with verses applicable in challenging circumstances:

*"Our comfort then is this alone: that we may
meet before your throne
And cry to you, O faithful God, for rescue from
our sorry lot.
For you have made a promise true to pardon
those who flee to you,
Through him whose name alone is great, our
Savior and our advocate."*

Lutheran hymnody, borne out of Reformation upheaval is a gift to the Church throughout the centuries. Many of these hymns appear in current hymnals and deserve to be learned, revisited, and sung. Our rich treasure of hymns enhances our worship of Almighty God and enriches our devotion. May we continue to sing unto God songs old and new—*Soli Deo Gloria!* 💧



THE POWER OF DATA



Pastor Peter D. Asplin

Assistant to the Bishop

peter.asplin@swpasynod.org | 412-367-8222

The United Nations has designated October 20 as World Parochial Reports Day! So let's talk about how wonderful and fun parochial reports are! (OK, since I know someone is going to search this online, I have to admit that the United Nations has not signified the importance of our ELCA annual parochial reports—Forms A & C—by giving it a special day. However, October 20 is indeed designated as World Statistics Day... look it up!)

Now it makes sense for a huge organization like the UN to be interested in statistics. One of the UN's key goals is to encourage economic and community development around the world, and statistics help all of us figure out how things are going. In the (admittedly opaque) language of the UN: "in establishing [World Statistics Day], the General Assembly invited all Member States, the United Nations ... and all producers and users of official statistics [That's us, SWPA Synod!], to do their part to highlight the value of statistics in meeting the challenges of our time."

One way for us as Church together to analyze what's happening today in our congregations and in our world is to keep track of things like worship attendance over time, baptisms and confirmations over time, and giving to congregations and to mission support over time.

But parochial reports don't only report on statistics. Our parochial reports also provide

a series of questions intended to help congregation leaders, pastors, congregation councils, mutual ministry teams, and vitality planning teams to look at where the congregation is today and compare that to where it was last year and in prior years.

The goal of questions 12a and 12b is to help congregations consider what congregational vitality looks like to them. In fact, our partners at the ELCA churchwide organization developed a discussion guide (use this QR code) congregation leaders can use to think through where we are today—and then you can look back at your prior year submissions and see where you evaluated yourselves then!



That's the gift of statistics—and reports. It's not simply to gather data, but to empower you and me, the synod and ELCA, and the United Nations in looking, at today and planning for tomorrow. 💧



MEETING OUR NEIGHBORS GRANTS



Pastor Melissa L. Stoller

Director for Evangelical Mission & Assistant to the Bishop
melissa.stoller@elca.org | 412-367-8222

With vaccinations becoming widely available for adults and older youth, the hope of returning to in-person gatherings is gradually becoming a reality. With these gatherings, many churches realize that new approaches and ideas are needed to welcome people back and welcome new people into worship as the church has changed.

One way the ELCA churchwide organization engaged this was with the Open Doors ministry grants for congregations. Announced in April of 2021, Open Doors grant applications were accepted through mid-May. The request was straightforward: if you have a concrete, actionable idea for meeting new people as we transition into a time of re-gathering in physical spaces, your congregation is invited to apply. In the end, 135 congregations from across the ELCA were awarded grants, all chosen by random selection, and the idea-sharing continues with the ELCA granting platform: elca.padlet.org/ELCA/OpenDoors.

This innovative idea caught the imagination of the Mission Endowment Fund Board (MEF) of our synod and at their May meeting they also decided to try something new. **Meeting our Neighbors Grants is a one time, granting opportunity open to any congregation of the SWPA synod who seeks to open their doors and meet their neighbors in new ways.** (Priority will be given to those who have not already received an ELCA Open Doors grant.)

"I think the purpose of these grants fits perfectly with the MEF resolution calling for 'witness ministry grants,'" said Rolph Otterness, member of the MEF board. "The board is being responsible to make these grants available during this unusual time we have lived through," added Rev. Jeff Shock, member of the MEF board. "And it fits well with our synod's mission, to serve, connect, and equip congregations."

The ELCA understands itself in three expressions—the congregation, the synod, and the churchwide organization—and this grant process shows how each is interconnected and related. As the Holy Spirit calls us into new ways of understanding church post-pandemic, we are invited to think creatively and expansively about our communities and all who can be gathered in to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. The Meeting our Neighbors Grant applications will be accepted through August 19, 2021, and are available on the synod website at swpasynod.org/grants. 💧



MINISTRY ACROSS DENOMINATIONS



Jennifer Peters McCurry

Ecumenical Affairs Chair & Associate Pastor at First English Lutheran Church, Downtown
jpm@flcpittsburgh.org | 412-471-8125

One of the strengths of the ELCA is the way that we attend to our ecumenical relationships. On a national level, we have been intentional about being in dialogue with Christians from a variety of denominations, which has led to ecumenical agreements framing natural places for collaboration in ministry. We have agreements with several full-communion partners, including the Presbyterian Church USA (1997), the Reformed Church in America (1997), the United Church of Christ (1997), the Episcopal Church (1999), the Moravian Church (1999), and the United Methodist Church (2009).

Here in southwestern Pennsylvania, we have been slowly living into these agreements, finding ways of celebrating our unity in Christ on both local and synodical levels. This is expressed through shared ministry projects, ecumenical worship services, and an orderly exchange of ministers.

The last of these—the orderly exchange of ministers—leads to the unique blessing of a clergy person from one denomination serving in congregations of another denomination. We have a collection of pastors and congregations currently living into our ecumenical partnerships in exactly these ways.

There are Lutheran congregations led by Episcopal priests. There is a Presbyterian pastor who simultaneously serves both a Lutheran congregation and a nearby Presbyterian congregation. There are Lutheran pastors who serve in Episcopal,

Presbyterian, and Methodist contexts. These cross-denominational collaborations reveal the presence and work of the Holy Spirit among us, blessing through word, sacrament, and mutual consolation in ways that give witness to Christ's transformation in the world.

Leaders from our synod and the Western Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church are currently working out details of how we can more intentionally collaborate in ways that bless our congregations with talented and faithful leadership from well-trained clergy – and that bless our pastors and deacons with expanded opportunities to serve Christ's church.

As a part of these explorations, our synod's ecumenical affairs committee would like to know: has your congregation developed a ministry relationship with a neighboring

Methodist congregation? Or are you a pastor or deacon who has developed relationships with nearby Methodist colleagues? If so, please fill out a brief survey using this QR code.



Read some of our synod pastors' reflections below about their powerful experiences serving in ecumenical ministry.

THE REV. CHERYL KHYLLEP,—PC(USA)
Former Pastor of St. John Mark Lutheran Church, Homestead

Serving a Lutheran church has taught me the richness that can be found in theological difference. Not only are you given a window into another faithful way of following Jesus Christ, but you are challenged to think through your church and your own beliefs in a way that can be outwardly practiced and articulated to your church community.

THE REV. TORREY JOHNSON—ELCA
Priest-in-Charge, Holy Cross Episcopal Church, Homewood

As a Lutheran pastor called as the priest-in-charge at an Episcopal church, I have been blessed to be able to truly live out my call as a true servant. I have been able to diversify the ministry opportunities to serve the community in which the Church of the Holy Cross resides. Through collaborative events with our Lutheran, Baptist, Catholic, AME, and Jewish brothers and sisters, we have been afforded financial support from these various ecumenical partners to bring after-school and summer enrichment programs for Homewood youth. We have sponsored Hannukah/Christmas toy giveaways, a gun-buy-back event, family oriented movies on the lawn, and we have offered our church as a site for social and criminal justice events with all of our ecumenical partners.

THE REV. SARA IRWIN—TEC
Pastor, St. John's Lutheran Church, Carnegie

When I approach the task of preaching—and theological reflection in general—I often think about Emily Dickinson's instruction: "tell all the truth but tell it slant" so that truth can "dazzle gradually." I think my congregation has benefited from the ecumenical nature of our partnership in the way my own spiritual background has enabled me to appreciate and articulate the beauty of Lutheran theology "at a slant."

THE REV. ERIN JONES—ELCA
Pastor, Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community, South Side

I so appreciate the challenge and gift of not assuming anything! If I'm preaching or teaching, I know that those listening come from vastly different backgrounds, and so I can't just fall back into "Lutheranese." I have to mine other traditions and vocabulary to get an idea across. I also love having colleague relationships across denominations!

THE REV. ALINA KANASKI—PC(USA)
Pastor, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Bower Hill

In the Lutheran context specifically, I love the liturgy. I love the sense of history, and the communion of the saints that comes with using words that have been used for years and years. I deeply appreciate the way that it can minister to me even when I am leading worship. 💧

HEALTH & WELLNESS MINISTRY



Patty Davidson

Health & Wellness Ministry Coordinator
patricia.davidson@lutherseniorlife.org
412-367-8222

On the heels of the Health & Wellness Ministry's 10th anniversary celebration two years ago, volunteers in congregations throughout the synod stepped up and adapted their strategies in order to meet the rapidly changing health and wellness needs of their congregations and communities. **Last year, the Health & Wellness Ministry recognized 540 ministers and volunteers throughout the synod for their time and dedication.** That number easily could have dwindled with the uncertainties of the pandemic. Instead it grew to more than 600 people fueled by faith and the desire to rise above their fears to help others through their fears.

Some ministry activities were able to continue as before the pandemic, and took on a more significant role. People were hungrier than ever for articles researched and presented by parish nurses and members of health teams. Volunteers extended calls and greeting cards to the entire congregation, who became at-home members en masse in the early weeks of the pandemic.

Other activities were modified to safely continue. Care packages and meals were delivered via a ding-dong-dash approach; window visits were conducted in lieu of indoor visits; and knitters and quilters found themselves sewing masks in addition to making prayer shawls and blankets. Blue Christmas services were relocated to online formats, reaching an entirely new audience of people seeking comfort and peace during the pandemic. The seven congregations offering this opportunity on Facebook or



YouTube averaged more than 225 views each.

Many congregations felt compelled to accomplish more in the local community. As an example, Trinity, Butler, made a concerted effort to support their local health care workers throughout the pandemic. Trinity sponsored hospital department meals; organized a candlelight vigil to encircle the local hospital in light; assembled multiple care packages; and most recently sent appreciation cards to health care workers of local care facilities.

Jesus teaches in Matthew 19 that nothing is impossible with God. The 600+ ministry volunteers working in our synod are proof of that. With God's guidance, we can tackle whatever comes next. For more information on the Health & Wellness Ministry, please visit swpasynod.org/ministries/health.

A FOND FAREWELL

My time with the Health & Wellness Ministry is coming to a close, as I am led to complete my first novel. If ever I need inspiration as I embark on this new journey, I need only think of your amazing work! Thank you for your partnership through the years. May God continue to bless you and your ministry!

-Patty Davidson



EATING AGAIN AT THE TABLE



Pastor Peggy Suhr-Barkley

Dean of Conference One & Pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church, Ellwood City
pastorpeggy@zoominternet.net | 724-752-3050

For all of us, the pandemic has meant many different things. We have all said and agreed that even when our church buildings were closed, mission and ministry still happened, the church never closed! All of us worked outside the box and learned to think, do, and be church, differently. For many of us, a meal that we partook of weekly, a meal central to our worship service and lives as Christians, the Sacrament of Holy Communion, the Eucharist, the Table of our Lord, the Lord's Supper, was suspended as worship took to the airways either with Facebook, Zoom, YouTube, livestreaming or some other means.

So how was it for YOU, when YOU returned to the table?

"It was emotional. I missed being a part of the family of God. It was almost like taking communion for the first time, like my first holy communion, all over again. I felt God's presence in my hands." (Barb Guenther, Trinity Lutheran Church, Ellwood City.)

"Communion was certainly missed. It was distributed differently and was temporary, at best. The words of the communion liturgy were a welcome part." (John Frantz, St. John's Lutheran Church, Perrysville.)

"Communion was very special and had a greater importance to me, since it had been so long since I had it." (Jane Bittcher, Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Glenshaw.)

"Finally, a feeling of normalcy. Here we had the familiar, in the un-familiar" (Kurt Herbst, First English Lutheran Church, Downtown.)

For me, as a parish pastor for 36 years, presiding over the table, especially during this time of pandemic has been very powerful and very emotional. I remember when we re-opened our church building in September of 2020, I would get choked up just thinking about the logistics of distributing the elements.

Even though some of us did not grow up with weekly eucharist, most of us have grown to appreciate and welcome the Lord's Supper, weekly. We at Trinity, Ellwood City, are still communing differently than when we did pre-pandemic, yet what a joy it is for me, to once again proclaim these words ... "Come to the banquet, for all things are now ready!" I trust that YOU, too, find much joy in that invitation as YOU come to the table of our Lord to receive His body and His blood! 💧

STAFF BOOK PICKS THAT INSPIRE



Deacon Beth Caywood

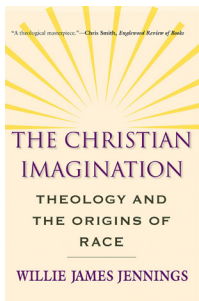
Director of Synod Resource Ministry

beth.caywood@swpasynod.org | 412-367-8222

We find inspiration all around us; our eyes and ears open our lives to endless possibilities of inspiration. If recognized, it bubbles up inside of us and changes our lives in unique and creative ways. If left to continue to grow, we might also see innovative refashioning of how we approach all of life. From small stirrings to massive undertakings, inspiration is often the spark that ignites us.

Author and director of the Creativity Institute, Scott Barry Kaufman, writes, "In a culture obsessed with measuring talent and ability, we often overlook the important role of inspiration. Inspiration awakens us to new possibilities by allowing us to transcend our ordinary experiences and limitations. Inspiration propels a person from apathy to possibility, and transforms the way we perceive our own capabilities."

The synod staff, as a whole, enjoys reading and has shared books that have impacted our lives in an inspiring or meaningful way. In recognition of National Read a Book Day on September 6, enjoy these diverse selections!

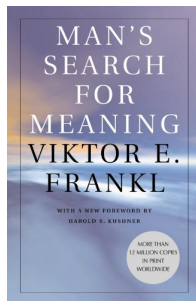


BISHOP KURT KUSSEROW

The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race by Willie James Jennings

Jennings employs both personal stories and world-class research in his invitation to the reader to imagine how Christian theology may better

engage the world than in the way imagined by 15th-century Europeans when they first began to encounter other peoples.

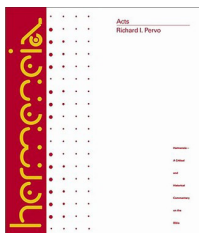


DEACON BETH CAYWOOD

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor E. Frankl

This is a title I have reread a number of times, finding new significance in each encounter. How he navigated an unbelievable experience and described man's freedom

to rise above his suffering, and also find meaning regardless of his circumstances, is profound.

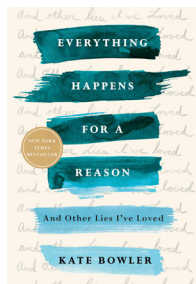


PASTOR PETER ASPLIN

Commentary on Acts by Richard Pervo

As a pastor engaged primarily in administration, it's sometimes a struggle for me to delve deep into

scripture. I also miss the discipline of technical exegetical work we all engaged in during seminary. As a result, I'm currently reading the Hermeneia series. I'm really enjoying, and being fed by, my work with Pervo.

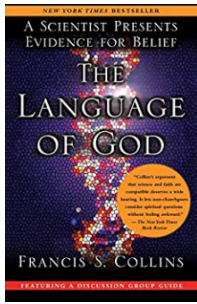


PASTOR MELISSA STOLLER

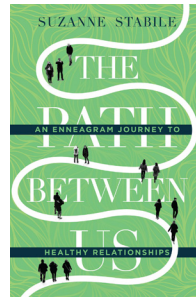
Everything Happens For a Reason: and other lies I've loved by Kate Bowler

This book, while small has offered many things to contemplate about not only the cultural platitudes that

are quickly shared in the face of grief and loss, but also the author's brave and vulnerable story of her own theological wrestling as she faced death and loss.



SANDY DELORENZE
The Language of God by Dr. Francis S. Collins
 Head of the Human Genome Project and Director of the National Institutes of Health, Dr. Collins clearly presents his case that science and faith are completely compatible. I am inspired by the story of faith developed and strengthened through study of creation.



LAUREN WOLCOTT
The Path Between Us: An Enneagram Journey to Healthy Relationships by Suzanne Stabile
 I find the enneagram helpful to understand my own way of existing in this world. This book focuses on relationships with the people we love who have very different motives, wounds, behaviors, and communication.💧

Colleague Connections

These listings are complete to the best of the knowledge of the synod staff. If you feel there has been an omission, please contact Sandy DeLorenze at sandy.delorenze@swpasynod.org or 412-367-8222.

Ordination Anniversaries:

August - October

- 5 Years: Pastor Beth Clementson
- 10 Years: Pastor Jonathan Jerry Lynn
- 35 Years: Pastor Karen Battle
Pastor Timothy Dawes
- 40 Years: Pastor Ruth Bosch Becker
Pastor Dona Van Eck
- 55 Years: Pastor Frank Zeman

New Calls:

- Pastor Sarah Lee-Faulkner** Pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Irwin, June 20, 2021
- Pastor Ryan Fitch** Assistant Director of Camp Lutherlyn. Ryan's ordination took place on July 17, 2021 at Camp Mount Luther in Mifflinburg.
- Pastor Kimberly Greway** (UMC) Contracted Pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church, North Versailles, July 1, 2021
- Pastor John Smaligo** Pastor of Hebron Lutheran Church, Blairsville, May 23, 2021
- Pastor Jennifer Soltis** Pastor of Nativity Lutheran Church, Allison Park, June 14, 2021
- Pastor Beth Wierman** (PCUSA) Interim Pastor at Zion's First, Ambridge, February 28, 2021

Leadership:

Congratulations to **Bishop-elect Paula Schmitt**, Intentional Interim Pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Latrobe, who has been elected Bishop of the Allegheny Synod.

Retirement:

Pastor Elaine Hower
 Pastor Scott Olbert
 Pastor Patricia Bonds
 Pastor Marsella (Susie) Esseck
 Pastor Robert Zimmerman

In Memoriam:

- Joyce Gleason**, May 27, 2021
- Pastor Philip Pfatteicher**, June 22, 2021
- Pastor Ronald Garrett**, June 26, 2021
- Pastor Dr. Roger Fischer**, July 1, 2021
- Nell Hatton**, Mother of Carol Ruckert, July 8, 2021

Prayer Requests:

Bishop Michael Lozano, Pastor Norman Nething, Pastor Frank Podolinski, Pastor Kimberly Rapczak, Pastor Don Worth

The most up-to-date list at: swpasynod.org/prayer

SYNOD STAFF PRESENCE | MAY-JUL 2021

Whether in the joy of celebrating milestones, the uncertainty of pastoral transitions, or the trauma of congregational crisis, the synod supports members during the biggest changes and needs. **Bishop Kusserow and assistants, Pastors Asplin and Stoller, have been present with the following congregations during in-person and online visits to ministers, lay leaders, and councils:**

Bethesda, Lower Burrell
Bethlehem, Glenshaw
Camp Lutherlyn
Christ, Duquesne
Christ, Millvale
Emmanuel, Ford City
Evangelical, Worthington
Faith, Natrona Heights
First English, Butler
First, Greensburg
Forks Zion, Leechburg
Good Shepherd,
Bower Hill

Good Shepherd,
McKees Rocks
Grace, Manorville
Grace, South Park
Holy Trinity, Brighton Twp.
Holy Trinity, Irwin
Hope, Beaver
Lutheran SeniorLife
North Zion, Baldwin Boro
Our Redeemer, McMurray
Perry Highway, Wexford
Prince of Peace,
Pleasant Hills

St. Andrew, Shadyside
St. John Mark, Homestead
St. John, Carnegie
St. John, Mars
St. John's of Highland,
North Hills
St. John's, North Versailles
St. Peter's, Uniontown
Stewart Avenue, Carrick
Trinity, Latrobe
Six Conference Caucuses

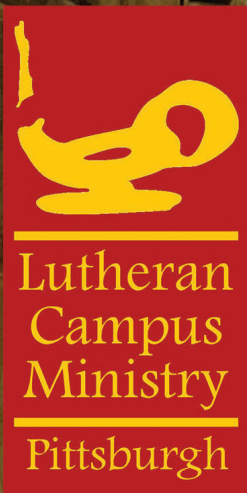
August



Calendar of Causes

SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIAL MINISTRY PARTNERS

September



Lutheran Campus Ministry provides opportunities for fellowship, service, worship and education at Pitt, CMU, Chatham and Carlow universities. All of these opportunities seek to deepen relationships with God and neighbor.

LUCPGH.COM

October





**SOUTHWESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA
SYNOD** EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH IN AMERICA

1014 PERRY HWY, SUITE 200, PITTSBURGH, PA 15237
WWW.SWPASYNOD.ORG | 412-367-8222

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
WEXFORD, PA
PERMIT NO. 286

Wayfarer

Issue No. 7 STORIES FROM THE ROAD



MORE STORIES & CONNECTIONS:
facebook.com/swpasynod

Devotional: BACK TO SCHOOL



Deacon Michelle Kunkle

Contracted to St. Luke's, Youngwood & Good Shepherd, Mt. Pleasant

Hi kiddos! It's back-to-school time! I know some of you are excited to go back with friends and teachers you missed. I also know some kids don't like to go back to school. But it's a new year and new things are waiting for you!

Did you know Jesus was a teacher? He loved to tell stories so we can learn about God and heaven and how we can live a good life. We get to hear Jesus' stories in our church family. Everything Jesus teaches us helps us wherever we are.

There's a really cool Bible story that shows us how to face anything in life by putting on the full armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18). It tells us that we are clothed in God's truth and the power to make right choices. God gives us peace and the good news of Jesus to share with others. We have the "shield" of faith to believe and trust in Jesus and the "helmet" of salvation to know how Jesus saves us.

After you read this Bible story, see if you can dress up in all the pieces of armor that it talks about. Maybe you can use a back pack, a hat, a belt, or a jacket. You can be so creative! You could also draw and color a picture of the story you hear. But always remember that no matter what, you carry Jesus with you always! 💧