

Wayfarer

STORIES FROM THE ROAD.



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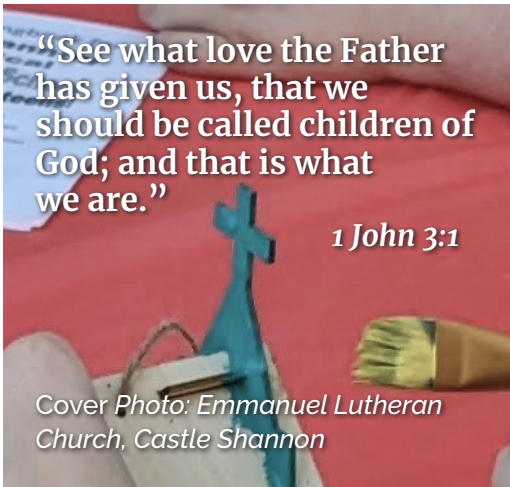
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**SOUTHWESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA
SYNOD**
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH IN AMERICA

MISSION:

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



Cover Photo: Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Castle Shannon

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SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD

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NAVIGATING CHURCH LEADERSHIP



Barbara Nugent

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Serving as a leader in your congregation can be both rewarding and terrifying at the same time. There you are, among friends, your community of believers, and you are chosen to lead your congregation either as president or vice president. Sure, you can handle leading a meeting and allowing the other council members to give their reports, and handle discussing the many decisions a congregation council needs to make. But then life happens, and you find out the reporting required; situations occur; personalities clash; decisions need to be made. Who do you go to for direction?

Many years ago, when I was first elected president of my home congregation, I honestly wasn't aware of everything I needed to know. I had served on our congregation's council, attended monthly meetings, and knew about our ministries. I had chaired many committees and was very active in our church. I certainly thought I knew what the president's role was. I soon found out that it involved much more. During my time as president, the church was at the end of a huge renovation with a capital campaign in play that came with its own set of issues. Of course, our synod office is available for resources and assistance, but sometimes you don't know what you don't know.

Once a year, typically in February, our synod holds a congregation council training event where officers and other key committee chairs (stewardship, evangelism, youth, social ministries, etc.) can come together for a one-

day training. This has been so valuable for people new to their positions as well as for people who have been at this for a while. It is a place to learn of new opportunities and new tools along with sharing of ideas to assist us in our work.

Then in 2020, in the heart of a pandemic when no one was together and our congregation council training wasn't going to be on the horizon for 2021, I felt a despair for those in leadership. Serving as the vice president of our synod, I needed to do something. The synod vice presidents across the country began to meet monthly on Zoom. During this time together with my counterparts in other synods, I learned of a few who had begun a monthly or quarterly leadership forum for congregation leaders using Zoom. I wanted to share my knowledge with the leaders of our congregations and thought this might be a good way to address the need.

In the summer of 2021, I held my first Navigating Church Leadership forum on Zoom. This is now held the fourth Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. The link to the Zoom meeting or call-in number is found on the synod's website calendar or in the weekly announcements email. If you are not receiving these emails and would like to, go to swpasynod.org/contact and sign up for the weekly newsletter.

Our time together is never longer than one hour. There is no agenda and it is not recorded. My background comes from serving as a congregation vice president, president, and secretary. I hold an insurance license, which helps with those types of conversations, but I do not give legal advice. I did serve as the charter organization liaison for the Boy Scouts of America many years ago as my home congregation is a charter for a local troop. I am also serving as the chair of our synod stewardship working group. I may not always have the answer to your question, but I will find an answer and get back to you.

The groups are typically small enough for easy conversation. I am aware of at least one person who meets with their pastor a day or two before our call to discuss questions they may have for our conversation. This is incredibly helpful, as it serves to give direction to that congregation along with

educating the others in the group. It's also nice to hear from others attending. Maybe you have valuable experiences that can be shared to help the group.

To give an example of information shared, did you know that in the state of Pennsylvania you can legally hold a meeting in person or using a computer video service like Zoom or Teams, where voting members can be seen and heard, or through a phone call; but you cannot hold a legal vote through a meeting using email? Knowledge like this might not have been thought of prior to the pandemic, but now it is critical information. No one wants their work to be challenged or overturned.

The pandemic created many opportunities that I would not have thought possible before. This is one that I believe is worthwhile continuing. If you have something that can't wait for the monthly leadership call, feel free to send me an email anytime. Remember, if you have a question, you are probably not the only one. I am always open to new ideas and welcome the expertise of others.

Thank you to those who are currently serving as leaders in your congregation or who have served in the past. Thank you for hearing God's call to serve his people. Don't ever think your work is not appreciated or not important. 💧



CONGREGATION COUNCIL TRAINING

Saturday, February 18
9:30 AM - 2:30 PM

Christ's Lutheran Church, Murrysville

Register at: [SWPASYNOD.ORG/CALENDAR/COUNCIL23](https://swpasynod.org/calendar/council23)

Nobel Peace Prize: Tawakkul Karman, Leymah Gbowee, & Ellen Johnson Sirleaf
Photo: Harry Wad



BOLD WOMEN'S SUNDAY: MARCH 5



Jennifer Armstrong-Schaefer
Executive Board, Women of the ELCA

The Women of the ELCA observe Bold Women's Day on the first Sunday of March each year. Bold Women's Day looks to celebrate all Lutheran women who act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ and who live out their baptismal call of being a disciple of Christ.

I had the privilege of hearing a bold woman speak at two triennial gatherings that I attended. Leymah Gbowee, a Nobel laureate and activist, spoke at the triennial gatherings in 2011 and 2017. Leymah is from Liberia and during the Second Liberian Civil War in 2003, led a women's nonviolent peace movement that helped to bring an end to the war. In her book, *Mighty Be Our Powers*, Leymah gives details of life during the war.

The women around her were tired of seeing women and girls raped and boys ripped out of their mother's arms to become soldiers. The women dressed in all white and went to a public place to protest each day. They spoke to all who would listen and took their demands to the president.

Through their work, they were able to help bring free elections to Liberia, which saw the first woman elected president of an African nation in 2005. These bold women knew that they could be killed at any time by soldiers

on both sides, but they had had enough and wanted a better life for their children and themselves.

Often as women, our boldness comes out of a place of having had enough with what is going on and feeling that we must take matters into our own hands. This is where women's organizations in the church started.

When women did not have voice or vote over congregational matters, they still wanted to live out their baptismal call to service. God called them to focus on women and children's issues in their local communities and in the world. Now that women have voice and vote in our congregations, we cannot lose sight of how God calls us today to be bold women in our congregations with our sisters in the Women of the ELCA and around the world.

The work of bold women will not end until all of our sisters around the world have voice and vote. 💧



Robbin Houston and Greg Yothers, 1984
while counselors at Lutherlyn



2021

CAMPING MINISTRY: A LOVE STORY

Greg and Robbin Yothers

Members of St. Luke's Lutheran Church, Youngwood

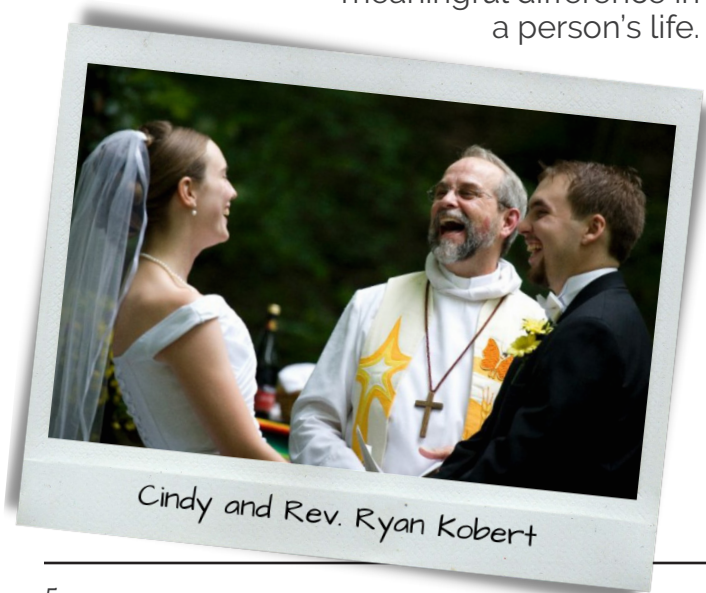
We met in the summer of 1983 at Lutherlyn Outpost Camp. Greg, 20, was one of the regular Outpost counselors that summer, and Robbin, 19, decided to volunteer for a week and was placed at Outpost. The day we met, we were dropped on the shore of Lake Authur at Moraine State Park with a dozen Junior High campers, a half dozen canoes, and four tents.

The week started out rough, culminating in Greg giving a mid-week speech about too much "animosity" in the group. Robbin chuckled under her breath that the kids didn't even know what that word meant. Things turned around, and by the end of the week the whole group had bonded. The week was one of those life altering times that makes a meaningful difference in a person's life.

Both of us had been raised in the church and had a strong basic understanding of our Christian faith—but seeing the Spirit at work that week, changing our lives and the lives of our campers, was a milestone in our faith development.

That magical week brought Robbin back to camp the following year to work the whole summer. Greg also returned, so we spent the summer working together at Outpost. The magic of that first week together was not equalled the next summer, but we did work well together and provided a nice experience for our campers. Living closely together in that setting allowed us to see the other person, warts and all. We were never a couple at camp, but started dating soon after college in 1986. We married in the summer of 1988.

What drew us together? Robbin was impressed with Greg's skills working with kids. We both saw that the other valued kids,



Cindy and Rev. Ryan Kobert



Rev. Joel and Mindy Benson



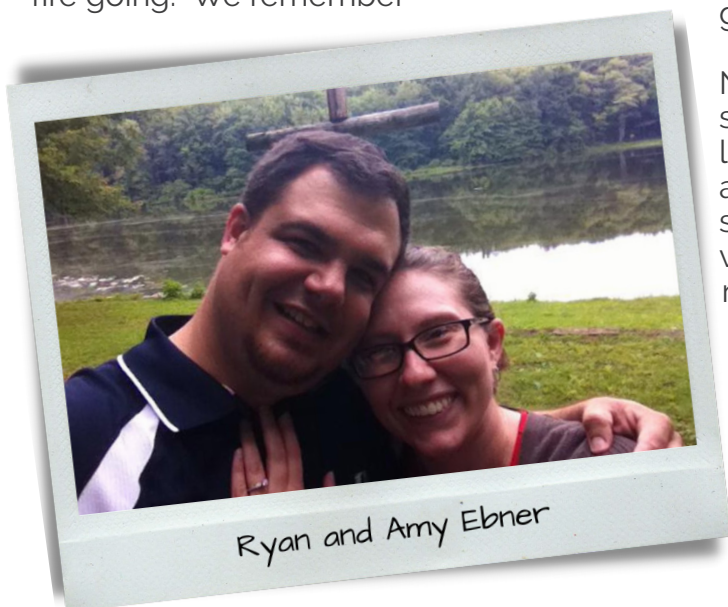
Tim and Sonya Stancec

family, and our shared Lutheran faith. We had a shared love of the outdoors. We had seen each other working through difficult issues with the kids (and others) at camp. We had already learned to negotiate around Greg being grumpy in the morning and Robbin needing a break for tea after supper.

We both remember laying in a field at night teaching the campers about the constellations in the sky. We remember difficult times, for example, when we couldn't locate one of our campers at the public beach area for half an hour, or the week it rained interminably and we couldn't keep our fire going. We remember

racing to get our canoes to shore as a thunderstorm rolled in. Greg fondly remembers Bible study in a tree, while Robbin still resents having to risk her life climbing up there.

The church camp setting was important in bringing us together. Where else are you likely to find a young single Lutheran who loves kids, family, and the outdoors? Our time working together provided about 10 weeks of shared experiences at a formative time in our lives. The shared values and experiences from our time as camp counselors have provided a strong foundation that has resulted in 34 years of marriage for us, still going strong.



Ryan and Amy Ebner

Not only did we meet our spouse working at summer church camp, we both developed leadership skills, self-confidence, and appreciation for our Lutheran faith. These skills have allowed us to excel in our vocations (Greg a statistician and Robbin a nurse practitioner), as well as being leaders in our congregations and the larger church.

This is our story, but we do know a few other camp couples. We think many of the experiences we had at camp were a part of their stories too. 💧

Thank you to the other "camp couples" who also shared their photos for this story.



Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Castle Shannon

ADULT VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL



Deacon Elizabeth Caywood

Synod Resource Ministry Director

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The idea began brewing in the mind of Pastor Susan Schwartz (Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Castle Shannon) as she welcomed teens back to in-person confirmation class. The Covid fears of the past several years were finally beginning to wane, and people were craving to be with other people. Zoom and other online connections were most appreciated but, as we all know, there is nothing like being present with one another.

In conversation with Jen King, office manager at Emmanuel and secretary at First Presbyterian Church in Castle Shannon, the topic of building relationships grew into a full-fledged opportunity for adults in the form of Vacation Bible School. Wait a minute... for adults?

Sharing their ideas with Rev. Catherine Day (First Presbyterian) blossomed into a program last summer, bringing adults from the two churches and the community together for six special evenings under a big tent on the front lawn of Emmanuel. Adults were treated to food, fun, song, study, crafts, and lots of laughter.

Each evening began with a sung grace (favorites from camp) and with food from local restaurants (think Emiliano's, Pasta Too) for five of the nights, ending with a fun "leftovers" night to make certain none of the great food was wasted. Following the meal, the key verse for the evening was shared,

with Bible study being provided by Pastor Day. Each study addressed relationships, such as the Trinity, family, and community. Another camp song was sung, and the group moved into a time for some simple crafts. The last night ending with *Life Stories*, a popular relationship-building game. Even evaluations of the week centered around building relationships. Instead of each person filling out an evaluation, each table worked on one form together.

Members invited their friends to attend—what an easy evangelism tool! The front lawn visibility also was key in attracting the community. Next year might have restaurants more involved with posters in their windows noting that they would be providing a meal. For more information on creating a program like this, contact Pr. Susan Schwartz, or Jen King at Emmanuel Lutheran Church, EmmanuelLutheranCS@gmail.com or 412-531-1080. 💧



Image via Canva

LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENTS



Pastor Peter D. Asplin

Assistant to the Bishop

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Sexual abuse, sexual violence, intimate partner abuse and violence, and other sexual crimes are far too common in the world, and have been common for far too long (see Genesis 34 for a Biblical example). Our church has been clear in confronting sexual violence, especially toward children, and working to protect those who have suffered.

As the church of Christ, we are faced with a dilemma. We believe that the gospel of Christ's welcome and hope is for all, including people who have proved themselves to be a danger to others. Our church seeks to be a place where anyone who needs to hear the good news of Jesus Christ is welcome. However, as our social statement *The Church and Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries* notes, "congregations that contemplate allowing anyone [to participate in the life of the congregation] who has been convicted of a sexual offense or who the congregation believes may present a danger to children or others should prayerfully realize that we also are called to protect the innocent and vulnerable."

In order to balance these two commitments, our church encourages congregations and sexual offenders to respond with openness, honesty, and clear expectations. One recommended practice is the use of Limited Access Agreements. These agreements set forth the congregation's commitment to sharing good news and

provide clear expectations regarding participation in the congregation. They often include a requirement that the offender only be present when an accountability partner is also present.

For example, the agreement may provide for the offender to join the congregation at worship, as long as an accountability partner is present. The agreement may also limit which restroom facilities the offender may utilize and require the offender to let the accountability partner know before heading to the restroom. If an offender refuses to abide by the agreement, or refuses to agree altogether, a congregation must act to prevent that individual from being present out of care for the vulnerable among us.

Limited Access Agreements signal both a desire to welcome and a commitment to safety. These clear boundaries contribute to healthy, safe churches. If your congregation is facing a circumstance where a Limited Access Agreement would be helpful, please reach out to Bishop Kusserow or myself. 💧



GOD, GRAMMAR, & GRACE



Pastor Melissa L. Stoller

Director for Evangelical Mission & Assistant to the Bishop
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On Saturday, March 4, linguists and language arts teachers across the country will celebrate grammar and promote its good use, not only in spoken and written arts, but with songs, jokes, and even a cocktail recipe. National Grammar Day, established in 2008 by the founder of the Society for the Promotion of Good Grammar, celebrates language and encourages people to “march forth on March 4 to speak well, write well, and help others do the same!”

But while educators celebrate, students groan who struggled to diagram sentences and memorize tenses. We find ourselves wondering if anyone at any moment could be listening to judge the subject and verb agreement. Even as I write this, I find myself hoping that my high school English teachers are not reading this article, as I have memories of language rules rather than language arts. **Fortunately, scholarship has changed in recent years to acknowledge that grammar is not necessarily a set of fixed rules. Rather, language is as dynamic and ever-changing as the people who use it to communicate.**

One of place we have seen this change in communication and understanding in the English language is in the use of pronouns, and in particular the use of the traditional plural pronouns of they/them. Pronouns have expanded to become identifiers for individuals who do not find self-understanding in traditional male or female

gender identities. Pronouns are helpful in our communication, but our English language offers us only he/she/it as singular options. Thus the language, and hence the grammar, is changing as our self-understanding as a community changes as well.

This change in self-understanding is not new to people of faith, for the way we identify God has always been dynamic and is always being made new. “People get worried about grammar all the time,” says Deacon Ross Murray, author of *Made, Known, Loved: Developing LGBTQ-Inclusive Youth Ministry*. Deacon Murray is the founding director of The Naming Project, a faith-based youth ministry and summer camp for LGBTQ youth and their allies. He serves as Vice President of Education & Training at the GLAAD Media Institute.

“When we think back to Moses and his encounter of God in the burning bush—when

Moses asks, 'who am I supposed to say has called and sent me?' God responds with *I Am*. God is not a he nor a she, but somehow transcends all of these things. God doesn't even stay within one tense! God is, was, and will be," writes Deacon Murray.

Throughout scripture we have identifiers for God and God's people that are non-gendered and "genderful." All of these terms are things we use so we can understand one another and who we are as a people, as children of God and siblings in Christ.

"LGBTQ terms and pronouns are not just labels or identifiers," continued Deacon Murray, "but they are adjectives and descriptors—a part of the way we describe a person or a community of people. It is an act of hospitality to share this information about ourselves and an act of trust. I trust you enough to share this information about who I am, information that can be weaponized or used to harm."

This is, unfortunately, happening in the debate over pronouns and other acronyms. When language and gender identity is misconstrued to be prescribed or fixed, words can be used to harm another rather than to connect.

"I think of the story of Jacob wrestling with the mystery person in Genesis where he asks for their name," Deacon Murray continued. "Knowing someone's name, historically has meant having some measure of power over them. By naming people or labeling them the way I see them, I have now set the expectation, and wish to fit them in my world view."

The act of asking and listening to understand as a person describes themselves is tougher work. Many of us have been taught to categorize and fit things into our own expectations, aligning with our own world views and experiences. When we encounter something or someone we struggle to categorize, then we can patrol or even persecute the other in order to align with our own understanding.

"We have to listen to people, and we have to believe what they tell us about themselves," urged Deacon Murray. "And people want to be more accurate and precise about their lives so they can share this with others."

And so, our language changes, our grammar adjusts, and our culture and society expands to include voices and identities that have been pushed to the margins or left out of the larger narrative entirely. These changes have begun to be reflected in relational interactions and practices. For example, in online conferences, some people have begun to include their preferred pronouns alongside their name to identify themselves to others in the meeting.

In my own practice, I have included my pronouns with my name in my emails, not only to indicate this part of my identity, but as a way of normalizing the practice, and as an act of hospitality to those who will find it helpful and life affirming. In a version of the traditional, "Hello, my name is..." nametags for guests to fill out when visiting, some congregations have begun to use labels that include a space to list pronouns. My congregation, St. Andrew in Shadyside, offers small stickers with preferred pronouns that I can add to my existing laminated nametag as a sign of welcome.

In our baptism we were named and called by God to be a part of the body of Christ working in the world. Our identity is, was, and will be known by our God who transcends time, space, and classification. The vocation that is set before us is to share the good news of Christ's unconditional love to all of creation and to love as God loves.

As humans, our language expands and adapts to shape our experiences of the world and our relationships with one another. On March 4, as we "march forth to speak well, write well, and help others do the same," we have the opportunity to listen well and learn well in order to help others know they are loved. 💧



GRANT SPOTLIGHT: IMMIGRATION



Pastor Linda Theophilus

Pastor of Emmanuel Lutheran Church, Eastmont
eastmontelc@hotmail.com | 412-824-4525

You know how the story starts: A young couple, fearing for their well-being and the life of their child, leave in the dead of night to find safety because their government considers them a threat. How is it going months later? Imagination and tradition answer that question for Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. For the thousands of families and individuals who are today's asylum seekers, the Welcoming Immigrants Housing Project of Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Eastmont is part of the answer.

For the past seven years, this project has provided for the crucial needs of asylum seekers and vulnerable immigrants in southwestern Pennsylvania, including accompaniment, housing, rent assistance, maps and bus passes, phones, medical and dental expenses, snow shovels, and school supplies. Generous grants from our synod's Ethel Verney Fund, and the partnership of other congregations and friends make this possible

Asylum seekers live in legal limbo. They are refugees, but they do not have the legal status of "refugee." They are barred from many of the programs that meet human needs, including most low-income housing programs. It can take years before they are officially granted refugee status by an immigration judge or asylum officer.

Most asylum seekers have family or friends who help them start their lives

here. Others arrive with nothing and have no one to join. Initially they need housing, as well as emotional and financial support. At this writing in December, the project sponsoring two families, providing advice to an emergency housing provider for a third family, and receiving requests from Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Las Cruces, NM, to receive more families. There is always a need for more sponsors, more volunteers, and low-cost housing. The project also looks for ways to increase housing and meet needs for families we never meet. Through Casa san Jose, Literacy Pittsburgh, South Hills Interfaith Movement, the Latino Community Center, or Jewish Family and Community Services, we give grants for rent, utilities, medical, and other needs that cannot be met otherwise.

Emmanuel's small congregation of grandparents is renewed and energized as we welcome strangers, reunite families, and provide stability for children. 💧



Hope Lutheran Church, Cranberry Twp.

HOPE'S DONUT WALL



Pastor Ronald Brown

Senior Pastor of Hope Evangelical Lutheran Church, Cranberry Twp.
pastorron@hlc.church | 724-776-3141

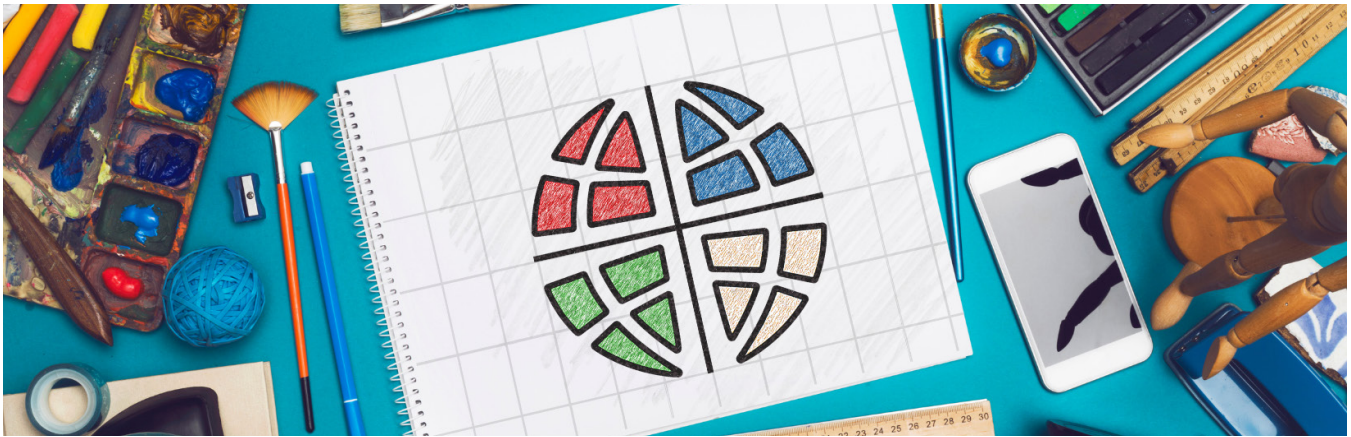
Chocolate Frosted. Cinnamon Twist. Cruller. Old-fashioned. Sour Cream. Glazed. What do all these have in common? They are donuts! Sweet, sugary, goodness! Who doesn't love a good donut every now and then? Whether there's cream dripping out of it, or it's covered with strawberry frosting, a donut can really make someone's day. And at Hope Lutheran Church in Cranberry Twp., donuts have become a staple of our hospitality ministry with our very own Donut Wall.

On the first Sunday of every month, Hope's Donut Wall comes to life. It was born out of necessity during the days of Covid to allow members, young and old, to enjoy their favorite comfort food. The Donut Wall is metal peg board with removable pegs where the donuts are placed and displayed. It was simple and easy to construct. And cleanup is minimal. The total cost to create this beautiful joy-bringer was less than \$100 with the help of a thrifty shopper.

Each month, a different ministry committee (such as stewardship, worship, youth, Christian ed, etc) is tasked with setting up and serving donuts. Not only do the volunteers on these committees serve donuts, but it's also an opportunity for those ministry areas to share what they are about, how to

get involved, and who the leaders are. But, above all else, the most important aspect of the Donut Wall is fellowship. When it's "Donut Wall Sunday" the Community Hall is filled with members and guests alike sitting around tables, standing in the hallways, or sitting on benches enjoying each other's company with their favorite donut in hand. What is not to love about seeing your parish family talk, smile, laugh, and eat together?

Sometimes we believe that a creative ministry to bring people together has to require a big investment of time and funding. But at Hope Lutheran Church, we beg to differ. It doesn't take a lot of resources to do creative ministry work. It just takes a thrifty shopper, a few dozen donuts, a couple of volunteers, and a beautiful Donut Wall! 💧



RENEWING CHURCH, REFRESHED BRAND



Lauren Wolcott

Synod Communicator

lauren.wolcott@swpasynod.org | 412-367-8222

Blink and you might miss it—the ELCA has a new logo. The changes are subtle (if you aren't a hawk-eyed branding nerd like myself), which might leave some people asking what the point is in changing it. The truth is that in branding, as in life, details matter. This update is an appropriate refresh that adapts to current-day uses.

Perhaps the most obvious difference is the smoothed lines of the globe's edges. Today, logos are often rendered at tiny sizes on our phones—say, as a profile image on social media—and highly detailed elements are lost when shrunken down. The smoother image isn't just a style preference, it is a functional adaptation.

Old:



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

New:



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The next detail you will notice is the change of font and wording layout. The entire logo now takes up less horizontal space, which allows it to appear larger within the same column width. The official font of the ELCA is now Proxima Nova, which comes standard in Microsoft and Adobe softwares, but may need to be purchased for use in others.

Congregations that follow the ELCA's guidelines for branding will want to update their own logo with these changes. Templates can be found at elca.org/Resources/ELCA-Branding. Please reach out to me if you need assistance in applying them. 💧

Revised Colors:



CMYK: 0c 100m 99y 4k
RGB: 227r 27g 35b



CMYK: 100c 45m 0y 14k
RGB: 82r 97g 172b



CMYK: 0c 28m 100y 6k
RGB: 238r 177g 17b



CMYK: 70c 0m 100y 9k
RGB: 73r 169g 66b

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:

January-April

5 Years: Pastor Ryan Pusch
15 Years: Pastor Jill McGregor
Pastor Janice Winters
Pastor Robert Zimmerman
20 Years: Pastor Bob Schaefer
35 Years: Pastor Susie Esseck
Pastor Ronald Weryha
40 Years: Pastor Robert Keplinger
45 Years: Pastor Martin Rafanan

New Calls:

Pastor Ryan Pusch,
Perry Highway Lutheran Church, Wexford

Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Truscott,
Trinity Lutheran Church, Freeport and
Faith Lutheran Church, Natrona Heights

Pastor Tara Lynn
Regional Representative,
Portico Benefit Services

Retirement:

Rev. Dr. Ann Schmid,
February 1, 2023

Welcome:

Pastor Wayne Harrison,
Southern Ohio Synod

Pastor Janice Winters (retired),
Southern Ohio Synod

Pastor Jeffrey Truscott,
Lower Susquehanna Synod

Births:

Olivia Bell Ruckert,
granddaughter of Carol Ruckert,
June 1, 2022

Jameson Michael Dishler,
great-grandson of Carol Ruckert,
December 1, 2022

Congratulations:

Our pastors who were selected to participate in the Lutheran World Federation's International Seminar:

Pastor Kimberly van Driel
(March, 2022)

Pastor JJ Lynn
(November, 2022)

Pastor Sarah Rossing
(November, 2022)

Pastor Kara Propst
(March, 2023)

In Memoriam:

John Schlotter,
brother of Pastor Robert Schlotter,
July 22, 2022

Pastor Jean Staffa,
November 13, 2022

Larry Royce,
father of Pam Kusserow,
November 18, 2022

Pastor Ralph Storm,
December 7, 2022

Arthur "Artie" Suhr,
brother of Pastor Peggy Suhr-Barkley,
January 8, 2023

Deacon Mark Nurnberger,
January 9, 2023

Prayer Requests:

Dominick Angelone
Pastor David Asplin
View the most up-to-date list at:
swpasynod.org/prayer

SYNOD STAFF PRESENCE | OCT 22-JAN 23

Whether in the joy of celebrating milestones, the uncertainty of pastoral transitions, or the trauma of congregational crises, 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:**

Berkeley Hills, Ross Twp
Bethel, AME, Pittsburgh
Bethesda, Lower Burrell
Bethlehem, Glenshaw
Brush Creek, Irwin
Emmanuel,
Castle Shannon
Episcopal Church of the
Redeemer, Squirrel Hill
Evangelical, Worthington
Faith, Natrona Heights
Faith, White Oak
First, Leechburg
Forks-Zion, Leechburg
Good Shepherd,
New Castle
Harrold Zion, Greensburg
Hebron, Leechburg

Holy Trinity, Irwin
Hope, Cranberry
House of Prayer, Aliquippa
Jacob's, Masontown
Lutheran SeniorLife
Oak Grove, Zelienople
Our Redeemer, McMurray
Peace, Greenock
Perry Highway, Wexford
Prince of Peace, Latrobe
PSALM, Pittsburgh
Rehoboth, Baden
St. Andrew's, Brownsville
St. James, Ligonier
St. John's, Connellsville
St. John, Mars
St. John's, Perrysville

St. Mark's, Brookline
St. Mark's, Springdale
St. Paul's, Carmichaels
St. Paul's Highfield,
Vandergrift
St. Paul's, Scottdale
St. Paul's, Sewickley
St. Paul's, Washington
Stewart Avenue, Carrick
Trinity, Butler
Trinity, Derry
Trinity, Freeport
Trinity, Latrobe
Van Kirk, Monaca
Zion, Penn Hills
Zion's, Greensburg

February



Camp Agapé is an outdoor ministry of the Lutheran Church, providing summer camping programs and retreat facilities. This beautiful rustic site allows you to enjoy the beauty and wonder of God's creation while experiencing an intentional Christian community.

campagape.org

Calendar of Causes

SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIAL MINISTRY PARTNERS

March



Lutheran SeniorLife

Lutheran SeniorLife provides the finest senior living communities and care options for seniors, as well as community-based health, wellness, and social services in western Pennsylvania.

lutheranseniorlife.org

April



Lutheran SeniorLife
Lutheran Service Society

Lutheran Service Society has been helping people of all ages, faith backgrounds, and financial circumstances for over 100 years. As part of Lutheran SeniorLife's family of services, Lutheran Service Society empowers neighbors to lead independent, dignified, and secure lives.

lutheranseniorlife.org



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Issue No. 13 STORIES FROM THE ROAD



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Devotional: THE LOVE OF EASTER



Bishop Kurt F. Kusserow

Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Bishop

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Oh, Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High

The Great Three Days are held together by love. This must be, for apart from love, Thursday's sacramental act of self-giving is only a sad memorial meal. Without love, Friday's holy passion is only a tragic ending. Even Sunday's glorious triumph over the grave, lacking love, benefits only the one who was raised—like winning some celestial lottery.

But look! Glorious, persistent love so permeates these Three Most Holy Days that we see them as one: a single gift of divine favor, thrice-manifest in the body of Jesus Christ.

"For you," Jesus confesses in the institution of the Lord's Supper. It was not a desperate need to be remembered that led him to take and break and give his own body in bread and wine. It was for love of his own. "For us and for our salvation," the creed declares of Jesus' holy suffering and sacred death on the cross. The Passion was no failure; it was an embrace. "For us he rose," that great 15th Century hymn proclaims, extolling love so deep, so broad, so high. (*Oh, Love, How Deep, ELW 322*)

Our great joy at Easter is to celebrate the one who seeks not himself but us, by joining him in self-giving; in welcome; in restoration. 💧