

Issue No. 15 | August 2023

Wayflower

STORIES FROM THE ROAD.



In this issue...

APPALACHIAN
MINISTRY

P. 4

CARE AFTER
TRAUMA

P. 5

QUILTS AROUND
THE WORLD

P. 7



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

Published by Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod

MISSION:

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



“How beautiful upon the
mountains are the feet
of the messenger who
announces peace...”

Isaiah 52:7

Cover Photo: Canva

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

meredythe.hlasnik@swpasynod.org

ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

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

COMMUNICATIONS

lauren.wolcott@swpasynod.org

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 02 *Building Bridges to the Future*
- 04 *Appalachian Ministry*
- 05 *Care After Trauma*
- 07 *Quilts Around the World*
- 09 *Benefits You May Have Missed*
- 10 *Blessed Bundles*
- 11 *Books We Love to Share*
- 13 *Report Now, Benefit Later*
- 14 *Colleague Connections*
- 16 *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
Loran Bohman
Rebecca Brunetta
Rev. Beth Clementson
Rev. Eric Damon
Emily Dazen
Rev. Susan Devine
Landon Dishart
Beryl Gundy
Rev. Brenda Henry
Kathe Houck
Tom Hough
Rev. Allyn Itterly
Janice Jeletic
Jen King
Rev. Heather Lubold
Rev. JJ Lynn
Pam Neale
Holly Schmitt
Rev. Michael Sourwine



Former East Liberty Lutheran Church, Image via Google Maps

BUILDING BRIDGES TO THE FUTURE



Bishop Kurt F. Kusserow

Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Bishop

kurt.kusserow@swpasynod.org | 412-367-8222

*Two are better than one, because they will have a good reward for their toil.
For if they fall, one will lift up the other. Ecclesiastes 4:9*

“Better Together” was our Synod Assembly theme last summer. “On the road together” is literally what the word “synod” means. The congregations of our synod are walking together along the road of faith because we know that we are better together. Here’s a concrete example of the benefit of our shared life that reaches back a few years into our history.

As 2013 began to unfold, three things became increasingly clear to the congregation of East Liberty Lutheran Church. Their church building was literally falling apart; the corner property on which it sat was increasing in value, but it would take funds that the congregation did not have to realize the potential value of its property to further the mission of the congregation. In conversation with the synod staff about these things it became increasingly clear that the synod, working together, could help resolve the situation.

Over many years, the synod has received funds from congregations ending their own ministries but remaining interested in helping to support other synod ministries in the future. Our synod’s sense of a shared mission larger than the ministry of any one congregation results in this particular kind

of investment being made. (For example, just this past summer another congregation, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church of Avalon, ended its ministry, directing the offering received at its closing liturgy to support shared ministries in the synod. This practice is like building a bridge to the future. If these funds, held in trust on behalf of the whole synod, could be made available to East Liberty, the congregation leadership could consult with realtors and attorneys and architects to discern the best use of the property in order to realize its full potential.

A no-interest bridge loan from synod resources was set up for this purpose, and the first installment was provided to East Liberty in March of that year. In December, another installment was provided, as the work of exploring the property’s potential future use was developing well but was not

yet complete. This work took longer than anyone had imagined, and in December 2014 a third installment of the loan was provided. A final installment was provided in December 2015. The sale of the property was finally realized in 2022, at which point the synod resources were returned in full so that other synod ministries could be supported in the future with the same funds.

The congregation of East Liberty is now living into a new future, with their own financial assets for ministry. Pastor Brenda Henry reflects on the current moment, "We are listening to how God's invitation to be a part of the East End mission field is shifting. We are paying attention to how God is stretching us into a different area of the East End community with new opportunities to serve, perhaps even calling us back to an area we served previously." Just as Ecclesiastes points out, the blessing of walking together with others in community helped the congregation of East Liberty Lutheran Church get back up and start moving forward again with hope.

But a no-interest loan was not the only gift that the synod was able to provide. One of the most significant resources that any synod can give to the congregations that share mission together is the capacity for patience

that a long history provides. And please recognize that "synod" does not mean the individuals who comprise our synod staff, but rather our community of 149 congregations in southwestern Pennsylvania.

The very nature of our life together as synod is to be on a very long walk. We think about and plan for and engage our shared mission across decades and through multiple generations. Our beginnings can be traced back to the 1770s, when the first of our congregations were founded. And we expect our future together to reach forward to the promised advent of our Lord Jesus at the redemption of all things. In every present moment along this long walk of faith that we share, the patience that comes from sharing a long history can be a significant gift. It certainly was for East Liberty. As the process took longer than anyone had imagined, the synod's gift, Pastor Henry points out, avoided "the crushing financial obligation of interest a traditional loan would have placed upon the congregation."

The patient collaboration of many congregations in one synod providing shared assets for each other is a long-term vision that blesses the faith walk that we are on even as it builds bridges to the future. ♦



CARE WITH THE WORD

*Preaching Respect for
the Jewish People*

Tuesday, September 12
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Wexford

&

Tuesday, February 6
Rodef Shalom Congregation
Shadyside



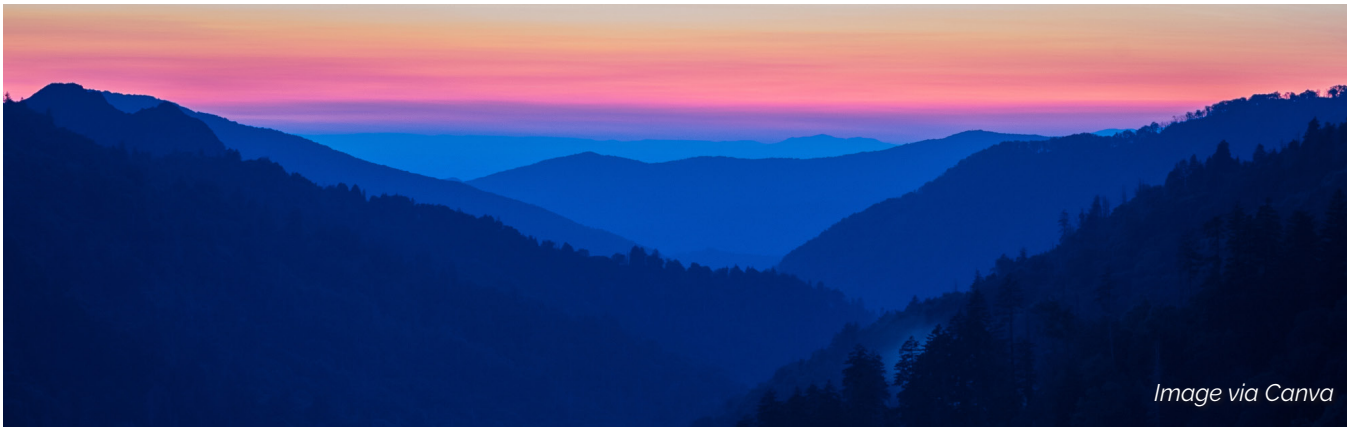


Image via Canva

APPALACHIAN MINISTRY



Bishop Matthew Lynn Riegel, S.T.M.

West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod Bishop
bishop@wv-wmd.org | 304-363-4030

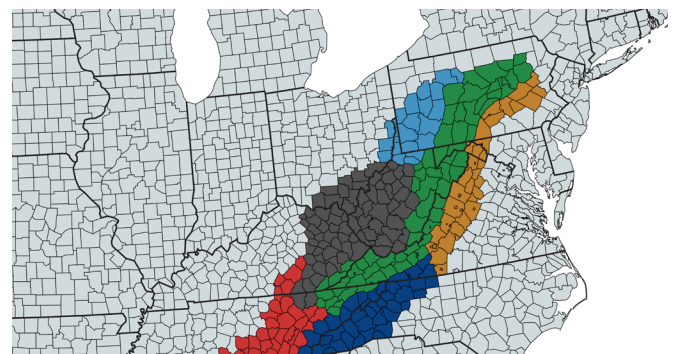
Almost as soon as I got assigned to an Appalachian synod, a well-meaning veteran pastor (who served outside our territory) said she would help me get out. Congregants in my own synod ask, “Who would want to come here?” Some pastors say, “Why would I want to go there?” So, let’s not mince words: ministry in Appalachia suffers from within and from without with an image problem. Those of us who love serving and living here might be tempted to counter with all the good things about Appalachian life and ministry, but, in doing so, we would establish the dignity of Appalachian ministry upon temporal things, ignoring the source of all true dignity.

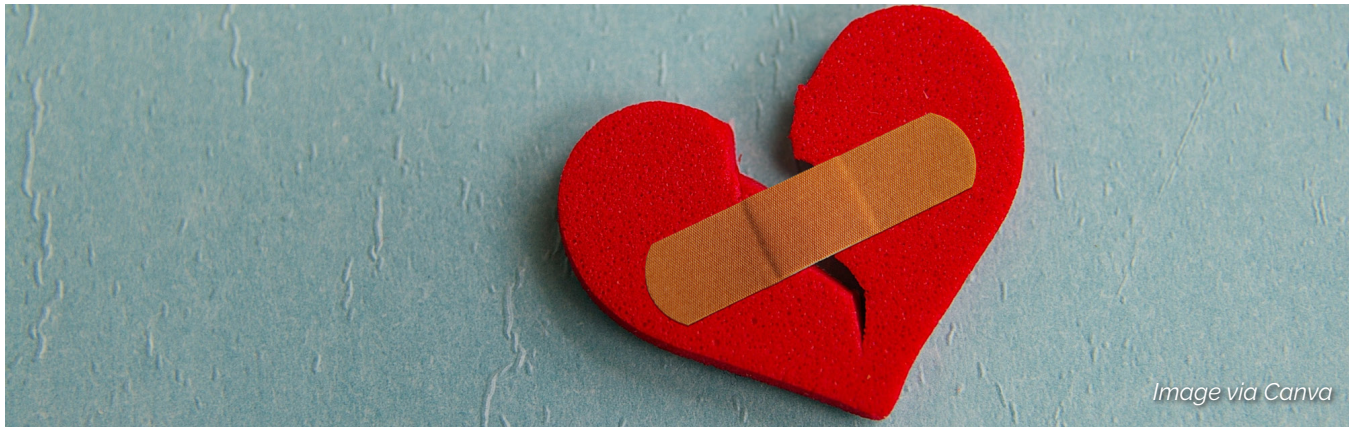
And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.
— Acts 1:8b

Last time I looked, Appalachia was somewhere between Samaria and Rapa Iiti. Being, therefore, within the geographic parameters set by our Lord Jesus before he ascended into heaven, the gospel ministry in Appalachia has his commission. The dignity of ministry in Appalachia is a function of that commission. It is the same dignity that is proper to the proclamation of the gospel no matter where that proclamation takes place, be it in Minneapolis, New York, Birdsboro, or even Jerusalem itself. When the ordained preach or the laity engage in the mutual conversation and consolation of the saints, they discharge our Lord’s commission, standing side by side with the apostles, sharing in that same dignity that is not of the

self but of the Lord’s work. In the flesh, Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalene are no different from us. In the ministry of the gospel, we are no different from them, two millennia and seven time zones notwithstanding.

Precisely because this dignity comes from God and not from us, it withstands every negative stereotype and all self-loathing. Who are we (or anyone else) to think less of this work in this place than the Lord Jesus who commands it? 💧





CARE AFTER TRAUMA



Pastor Christina Hough

Director of Mission Advancement, Glade Run Lutheran Services
chough@gladerun.org | 724-452-4453 x1150

We are shaped by life's moments, the good and bad. Our experiences influence our decisions and shape our daily life together. Our past tells our story and informs our future. This is true for all of us—individuals, families, communities, congregations, and even synods. Where we have been, what we have experienced, and the people we have encountered have all played a role in shaping who we are and how we engage in the world today.

All too often, large pieces of those stories go untold because they are moments of trauma, adversity, or chronic stress. These are the stories that make us feel ashamed or embarrassed. These stories are too painful or complex to tell. These are parts of our past that we wish we could simply erase away, so we pretend they never happened and bury them deep down. Adversity and chronic stress are very real parts of everyday life, especially in these last few years. These experiences are common to all of us.

The Sanctuary Institute is a community of learning for trauma-informed care providers, promoting safety and social emotional wellness. Glade Run is certified by the Sanctuary Institute and is guided by the understanding that many of the challenging behaviors displayed by individuals we encounter are directly related to those stressful experiences. Bessel van der Kolk, M.D., a leading author, professor and trauma expert, describes trauma as an experience

in which a person's internal resources and external resources are inadequate to cope with an external threat. External threats, whether a one-time trauma event like a car accident or loss of a loved one, or an ongoing experience like poverty, violence, or abuse, can have lasting impacts on individuals. However, through creating trauma-informed environments, individuals and communities can begin to heal from those experiences.

One example of how Glade Run's trauma-informed care training and resource support was utilized with a congregation was following a traumatic experience. Glade Run consulted with the congregation and, in this case, the synod, to develop a plan of support and identify needs. We started by developing trained listening teams to provide safe spaces for people in the congregation to process the situation. We scheduled several different sessions for different groups to assure safety, and provided resources on open communication

and healthy conversations. The congregation was provided with training and tools to have safe, constructive, and productive problem-solving meetings. The training taught the congregational leadership how to identify and problem-solve areas of concern before they became harmful or problematic.

Another congregation used trauma-informed practices to support the work of the mutual ministry team by teaching them how to use a community meeting ground for their meetings. We also worked together to create a timeline, identifying joys and struggles to help them celebrate as well as lament. This allowed them to identify and work through situations from their past that were negatively impacting their current ministry and ability to move forward positively.

Trauma-informed care training has helped individuals and congregations understand the impact of trauma, chronic stress, and adversity, and how it shapes the present and future. Our training helps make these traumatic experiences less intimidating and less scary, while normalizing it as just part of our story. There is power in naming and claiming our history, including trauma, so that we can heal, grow, and move forward.

The Sanctuary® Model is a blueprint for clinical and organizational change which, at its core, promotes safety and recovery from adversity through the active creation of a trauma-informed community. It centers around seven commitments as well as a set of

specific tools that help to establish safe and healthy communities. These commitments help us to tell our story and envision a future of health and growth.

Glade Run can support congregations not just in times of adverse or traumatic events, but also in preparing for transition, discernment, mission planning, or problem solving. The tools equip congregations for healthy conversations, learning, stewardship, and growth through creating safe spaces to explore the entirety of your story. Glade Run can help provide tools, resources, and training tailored to your congregation's needs.

Mister Rogers once said, "Anything that's human is mentionable, and anything that is mentionable can be more manageable. When we can talk about our feelings, they become less overwhelming, less upsetting, and less scary. The people we trust with that important talk can help us know that we are not alone."

The trauma-informed care approach helps people and congregations make traumatic and adverse experiences mentionable. Then, by creating an environment that promotes healing and safety, one can start managing.

Curious about how Glade Run and trauma-informed care approaches can help your community? Contact us—tell us your story. Together we help you create a safe, sanctuary space and make the unmentionable, manageable. 💧

7 SANCTUARY COMMITMENTS

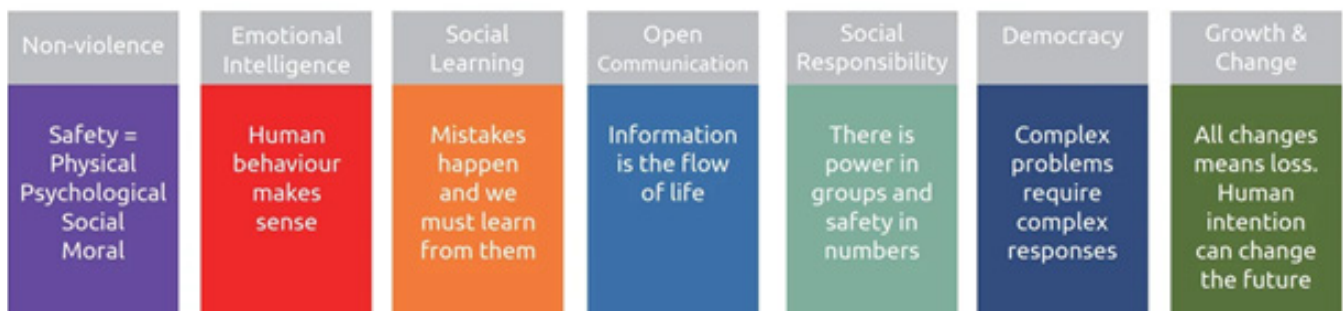
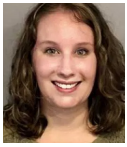


Image © Forge Care



Bundles of quilts and boxes of kits in the New Windsor, Maryland, warehouse, ready for shipment to Türkiye

QUILTS AROUND THE WORLD



Emma Wagner

Manager of Congregational Engagement, Lutheran World Relief
ewagner@lwr.org | 410-375-8133

Lutheran World Relief quilts and kits are an answer to prayer. For more than 75 years, Lutheran World Relief (LWR) has responded to war, disaster, and emergency by turning the compassion of quilters and kit makers in Lutheran congregations into tangible items that meet urgent needs and offer glimpses of hope for families experiencing crisis. **St. John's Lutheran Church of Perrysville has been making LWR quilts for decades. Carolyn Caye, a member of the quilting group of 35 years, says they average about 200 quilts every year! She says, "I can't imagine being really cold and not having a cover."**

First response in an emergency

Although a quilt or a bundle of hygiene supplies might seem like a drop of help in an ocean of need, these basic necessities might be impossible for families to find on their own in the wake of disaster.

Onur and Feride Aaikgöz say their family could get "nothing at all" in the aftermath of the February 6 earthquake that destroyed their city and their home in Türkiye.

"People looted most of the markets," Mr. Aaikgöz told Lutheran World Relief. "They looted the big shopping malls and left nothing."

Large-scale disaster, like those our neighbors in Türkiye and Ukraine are experiencing, often means stores and markets are shut down. Transport becomes extremely limited. It gets cold at night, and the simple act of handwashing might become a luxury. LWR

quilts and kits serve as a first response to basic material needs, getting families through until longer term solutions can be found.

The only help available

Additionally, Lutheran World Relief is sometimes the only organization that reaches communities in distress. Following back-to-back hurricanes in Honduras in 2020, LWR quilts and kits, coupled with the food packages, were the only aid that reached hundreds of rural families whose remote villages, livelihoods and homes had washed away.

"The Quilt & Kit Ministry allows LWR to love our neighbors during the hardest time of their lives, when they are exhausted, homeless, grieving and terrified. Without your generosity, some neighbors may be completely on their own to survive when everything they worked for is gone. Your quilts and kits are literally the answer to their prayers," said Daniel

Speckhard, president and CEO of LWR.

How your quilts and kits fill the gap

In the wake of disaster, every quilt and kit has an important role to play. Here are a few examples:

LWR Mission Quilts are a comforting hug wrapped around someone's shoulders and a practical item providing for warmth, shelter and more. LWR's Maryna Zuy Hayes reflects on a distribution she facilitated in Ukraine, "It was quite emotional. When we arrived, people started surrounding us — mostly young women with children. Some had withdrawn expressions, some looked around suspiciously and some were barely holding their tears... But when the quilt and kit distribution began, joy and gratitude spread quickly among all of us. One mother who received a quilt and a Baby Care Kit burst into tears — grateful that someone on the other side of the world would care enough to make these items and send them all the way to Ukraine."

Personal Care Kits not only provide hygiene essentials that keep people healthy, but they also offer a measure of dignity for those who have not been able to care for their bodies as they normally would. LWR's Moses Kabongo says these kits are especially useful for pregnant and new mothers. "The items help them clean and cover themselves and their babies, protecting them from the cold," he says. "In addition to keeping themselves and



Kirikhan, Türkiye



Morshyn, Ukraine



Morshyn, Ukraine

their babies clean, they also love the soaps because they smell so good!"

School Kits give children the ability to attend school, supporting both their education and a sense of normalcy and stability after a crisis. Following hurricanes Eta and Iota in Honduras, one mother said, "Since the start of the pandemic, my husband, who is a security guard, had his salary lowered. We could not buy school supplies for our children so they could receive their classes. We live in a very poor area along the river border and after the hurricanes could not find any help. The school supplies are a great blessing to my children and our family."

Thank you for being an answer to prayer on a neighbor's darkest day. To learn more about how to make LWR mission quilts or kits, visit lwr.org/quilts or lwr.org/kits.

Make the journey possible

As you may imagine, transporting quilts and kits around the world is a significant expense. It costs tens of thousands of dollars to ship these items to communities in need every year.

Your support of the Quilt & Kit Shipping Fund is an immense help and ensures your quilts and kits get to those who need them as quickly as possible during a crisis. Thank you for loving your neighbors through the Quilt & Kit Ministry. 💧



BENEFITS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED



Pastor Tara Lynn

Regional Representative, Portico Benefits Services
tlynn@porticobenefits.org | 412-444-8113

I recently received a phone call from a pastor who needed help with his Portico health benefits. As we were talking, he shared a bit more about his circumstances and during the conversation I was able to share with him additional benefits through his Portico sponsorship that he was unaware of, even after serving for more than 25 years in the ELCA. **Before he hung up the phone he said, "I never knew I had so many benefits through Portico! Promise me that you will let our other colleagues know, especially because these are challenging times to be in ministry and we need all the resources we can get!"**

Many people are aware that Portico provides health and retirement benefits for sponsored plan members who are rostered leaders or lay church professionals in the ELCA. Listed below are three lesser-known benefits Portico has to offer:

1. In 2021, Portico launched *Being Here*, a podcast that explores real world issues and topics important to faith leaders, with an eye towards building a stronger and more resilient community of people within the church. Some of the topics the podcast has explored include burnout, compassion fatigue, grief, racism, innovation in the church, and creation care. Anyone, plan member or not, can access the podcast at portico.thebigknow.com/home/audio-series/portico-being-here/overview. For plan members, this site also includes webinars and videos on topics related to well-being.
2. Portico plan members and their family have access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). Access 24/7 confidential support from master's level therapists for six sessions per issue per year. Get the help you need for life changes, stress, grief, depression, or issues with relationships, substance use, or sleep.
3. If you are a Portico plan member and have been thinking about reviewing your financial situation, would like to make a financial plan for your future, or are looking to retire soon, Portico has financial planners who can assist you for free as part of your benefits package. They can be reached at 800-922-4896.

Plan members can find more information about their benefits in the My Portico online portal (myportico.porticobenefits.org) or feel free to call or email me at any time. 💧



BLESSED BUNDLES



Pastor Brenda Henry

Pastor of Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries (PLUM)
rev.brenda.henry@plumofpa.com | 412-466-7773

Blessed Bundles, a ministry of Lutheran Church of Our Saviour in North Huntingdon, assists families by providing diapers, wipes, gently used clothing, toys, and books. The ministry began in February 2016 and has steadily grown in the number of families they serve. In the past year, the ministry has served approximately 100 different families and as many as 188 children.

Each family receives a monthly supply of diapers and wipes calculated according to the age of the child(ren). An average of 60 families and 162 children are served each month. It costs on average \$15.50 for diapers and wipes per child. Through the Verney Fund, Blessed Bundles was able to meet this basic need for families. In this last year (June 2022 – May 2023) Blessed Bundles purchased \$19,000 in diapers, wipes, and pull-ups for families.

Families are also invited to peruse the selection of other items and gather what they need. Ministry Coordinator Pam McCurdy has this to say: "I think my favorite thing about Blessed Bundles is the way we recycle items. Clothing and baby equipment that would have ended up in a landfill are reused. Not only do we get these items donated from the community but the families who come often return the clothes and baby items when they no longer fit or are needed.

"The other thing I *love* is our little library. I am a big proponent of literacy to help break the cycle of poverty. The more these kiddos are exposed to books, the greater chance they have to succeed in school."

Through the generosity of the Verney Fund, families receive the care they need. They in turn reciprocate the love and support they receive by contributing their gently used clothing back to the community.

This mutual care reminds us that the ministry not only helps families, it also creates opportunities for families to offer care. Thus, reflecting our 2023 Synod Assembly theme that we are indeed "Better Together."

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 💧

BOOKS WE LOVE TO SHARE



Pastor Melissa L. Stoller

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



For the past three years, the pastors and deacons of the our synod have gathered together monthly via Zoom for continuing education and mutual ministry support. In June, we were able to gather together in person in North Park, near St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Our day included a thank you to outgoing conference deans, a liturgy of installation for incoming deans, a book swap, fellowship, and lawn games! A lunch of pulled pork sandwiches and delicious salads was provided by the Little Free Food Truck, a ministry from House of Prayer Lutheran Church. Conference deans were invited to share a bit about the book they brought to swap, and some excerpts are on the next page.



Apostle of the Crucified Lord: A Theological Introduction to Paul and His Letters, 2nd Edition

By Michael J. Gorman

The apostle Paul shaped the theology about Jesus Christ in the early, emerging church. Paul formed his theology with the instrument of the cross of Christ. In his treatment of Paul, Gorman stays true to Paul's cruciform-shaped way of looking at the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and how this lens impacts the worship, social, economic, and political engagement and life of believing communities. Gorman provides loads of contextual, historical background on Paul and on the Christian communities that Paul heavily influenced as a preacher, teacher, and administrator. I was introduced to Gorman's book in seminary. It remains my first go-to source on Paul, when I am preaching and teaching on the thirteen Pauline epistles. I recommend it, both for its comprehensive look back into Paul and the emerging church, and for its reflections and questions to the church emerging today and how we engage and are shaped by Paul's cruciform theology.

— Pastor Kara J. Propst

The God of Hope and The End of The World

By John C. Polkinghorne

For three years, an inter-disciplinary team met in conjunction with the Center for Theological Inquiry at Princeton to reflect on the nature of Christian hope in the twenty-first century in light of modern knowledge. That work produced a collection of essays titled *The End of the World and the Ends of God*, edited by John Polkinghorne and Michael Welker. Due to the specialized and perhaps dense material published in that volume, a more easily digestible book that brought together many of the topics and themes put forward in those essays, but penned by a singular author, was planned. *The God of Hope and The End of The World* is that book. Written by John Polkinghorne, both a physicist and an Anglican priest, synthesizes this singular volume that relies on scientific and cultural knowledge, as well as biblical and theological reflection. Polkinghorne shapes the book through his own lens, not merely summarizing the more scholarly work, which proves a strength here as he argues that the Christian faith is essential to determining if the world as we know it makes sense not only for us now, but for all eternity. This relatively short book is a solid piece of dialogue between the realms of faith and science. While Polkinghorne died in 2021, he leaves behind a great legacy of working to make sense of the world in light of the hope that God provides.

— Pastor Brian Bennett

Staying Awake: The Gospel for Changemakers

By Tyler Sit

Tyler Sit is an ordained minister in the United Methodist Church, and pastor of New City Church in Minneapolis. Sit is a Chinese American and member of the LGBTQIA+ community, and as such this book centers an important voice and offers a perspective on justice and discipleship from someone representing marginalized communities. As a pastor, he offers discipleship practices that have been helpful in his congregation and community. Chapters focused on these practices include worship, centering marginalized voices, prayer, small groups, Sabbath, leadership development, generosity, planting, and putting it all together. Chapters feature thoughts from Sit and members of his church community, and include practical steps to take to apply the ideas to your life of discipleship. The book has a good balance of humor and seriousness, theological statements and practical ideas. All of the areas of discipleship that Sit focuses on may not be applicable for every congregation, community, or individual, but he provides a good framework from which to start. A free discussion guide for groups is provided on his website: tylersit.com/stayingawakediscussion

— Pastor Jocelyn Johnston 💧



REPORT NOW, BENEFIT LATER



Pastor Peter D. Asplin

Assistant to the Bishop

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

Did you know that every year, each congregation in the ELCA is asked to submit a report on the current status of their congregation? Each year the ELCA creates a snapshot of our denomination which provides a quick outline of who we are as Church together (elca.org/news-and-events/elca-facts). Additionally, each synod has a set of demographic reports (elca.org/resources/congregation-and-synod-data).

And did you know that you can see an analysis of your own congregation's data? You can reach this information through the ELCA Directory (directory.elca.org). Once you register as a user for the directory, you can then search for your congregation, by clicking "Congregations."

What's important to remember about this data, is not only how it helps everyone in the ELCA understand who we are, and how things are going all round the country—but that if your congregation is calling a new pastor, or hiring a youth director, or looking for a congregation secretary—key leaders, especially rostered leaders, will regularly check out this information when they are reviewing a congregation as a possible ministry site.

So while you might think your pastor is going to stay with you another ten or twenty years, sometimes pastors or youth directors or music directors take a new direction in

life. And then the annual parochial reports can suddenly be a real asset for showing a potential pastor or music director how strong and positive things are at your congregation.

Unfortunately, some congregations don't submit their parochial reports regularly, which makes the trend reports a pastor or deacon might review next to worthless. When a congregation is entering the call process, and has only submitted parochial reports twice in the last ten years, that sends an unfortunate message of lack of commitment to our joint ministry as Church, or of a desire to hide from the realities of demographic change.

So next spring, when the pastor comes to council and asks for help submitting a parochial report, support them in that work, because it helps us all as church together, and because it helps your congregation tell its story to people open to serving amongst you. 💧

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

20 Years: Pastor Brian Bennett
25 Years: Pastor Elaine Hower
35 Years: Pastor Jeffrey Truscott
30 Years: Pastor Peter Nordby
45 Years: Pastor James Roth
Pastor Blair Morgan
55 Years: Pastor Wesley Weidenhamer

Ordinations:

Pastor W. Roger Randolph, July 1, 2023
Called to Southeastern PA Synod
Pastor Jamie Lynn Ulrich, July 30, 2023
Called to Southern Ohio Synod

New Calls:

Pastor Andrew Fitch, Harrold Zion, Greensburg
Pastor Larry Kemp, Trinity, Wexford
Pastor Jonathan "Jono" Adams, St. James, Ligonier
Pastor Scott Bryte, Peace, Greenock and
St. John Mark, Homestead

Installations:

Pastor Jeffrey Truscott, Trinity, Freeport and
Faith, Natrona Heights
Pastor Ryan Pusch, Perry Highway, Wexford
Pastor Daniel Clark, Stewart Avenue, Carrick
Pastor Andrew Fitch, Harrold Zion, Greensburg
Pastors Jason and Jessica Felici,
Trinity, Latrobe

Welcome:

Pastor Christine Bridge,
Transferred from New Jersey Synod

Congratulations:

Pastor Brian Bennett,
Joseph A. Sittler Award,
Lutheran Campus Ministry Network

Pastor JJ Lynn,
Serve. Pray. Speak. Award,
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in PA

Pastor Jennifer Peters McCurry,
LuMin Travel Scholarship,
Lutheran Campus Ministry Network

Retirement:

Bob Cairns, Synod Accountant,
August 31

In Memoriam:

Carol Main,
wife of Bishop Donald Main,
April 9, 2023

Marta Hamme
mother of Pastor Jess Felici
April 15, 2023

Sandra Gustafson,
wife of Pastor Phil Gustafson,
April 28, 2023

Susan Merkner,
wife of Pastor Richard Merkner,
April 29, 2023

Pastor Larry Camberg,
June 7, 2023

Jean Slingluff
wife of Pastor Jim Slingluff,
June 27, 2023

Kellie Wolcott,
sister-in-law of Lauren Wolcott,
July 2, 2023

Dick Roberts,
father-in-law of Deacon Deb Roberts
July 27, 2023

Prayer Requests:

David Brauer; Wilma Cairns,
Pastor Richard Grance,
Pastor Wayne Harrison, Gus Keiser
[View the most up-to-date list at:
swpasynod.org/prayer](https://swpasynod.org/prayer)

SYNOD STAFF PRESENCE | APR-JUN '23

Around the River Lutheran Parish, Beaver County
 Berkeley Hills, North Hills
 Bethesda, Lower Burrell
 Camp Lutherlyn
 Christ, West Newton
 Emmanuel, Castle Shannon
 Faith, New Florence
 Faith, Upper St. Clair
 Faith, White Oak
 First English, Butler
 First, Apollo
 First, Downtown
 First, Greensburg
 Forks Zion, Leechburg
 Good Shepherd, Bower Hill
 Good Shepherd, Greensburg
 Good Shepherd, New Castle
 Grace, Monongahela
 Grace, Rochester

Harrold Zion, Greensburg
 Hebron, Leechburg
 Holy Trinity, Beechview
 Hope, Cranberry
 Hope, Smithton
 Lutheran Campus Ministry
 Lynnwood, Belle Vernon
 Mt. Zion, Donegal
 Oak Grove, Zelienople
 Peace, Greenock
 Prince of Peace, Latrobe
 Prince of Peace, Pleasant Hills
 Spring Church, Apollo
 St. Andrew, Shadyside
 St. James, Ligonier
 St. John Mark, Homestead
 St. John, Carnegie
 St. John's, Perrysville
 St. Luke, West View
 St. Mark, Brookline

St. Mark, New Stanton
 St. Mark, Springdale
 St. Matthew, Crafton
 St. Matthew, Hunker
 St. Michael, Brick Church
 St. Paul Highfield, Vandergrift
 St. Paul, Monessen
 St. Paul, Uniontown
 St. Paul, Zelienople
 St. Peter, Evans City
 Stewart Avenue, Carrick
 Trinity, Avalon
 Trinity, Butler
 Trinity, Ellwood City
 Trinity, Latrobe
 Trinity, Wexford
 United Rockville, Ford City
 Zion, Harmony
 Zion, Penn Hills
 Zion's, Greensburg

August



United Lutheran Seminary

United Lutheran Seminary is a welcoming and diverse learning community equipping people to proclaim the living Gospel for a changing church and world.

UNITEDLUTHERANSEMINARY.EDU/GIVING

Calendar of Causes

SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIAL MINISTRY PARTNERS

September



**Lutheran
Campus
Ministry
Pittsburgh**

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



A worshipping community in the city neighborhood of Brookline. Hearing the call of Christ to feed His sheep.

COMMUNITYTHREE4ONE.ORG



**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

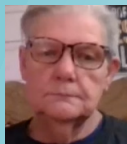
Wayfarer
Issue No. 15

STORIES FROM THE ROAD



MORE STORIES & CONNECTIONS:
facebook.com/swpasynod

HILDEGARD COMMEMORATION: SEP. 16



Pastor Susan A. G. Irons

Pastor of Around the River Lutheran Parish
tubarev@gmail.com | 412-499-0798

Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) was a German Benedictine abbess, polymath, writer, musician, composer, philosopher, mystic, medical writer, and pharmacist during the 12th century. Deeply in love with God, she saw God's image everywhere—"Every creature is a glittering, glistening mirror of divinity," she wrote—and developed a profound reverence for nature and humanity's proper relationship with creation.

Hildegard began to understand humans as "sparks" of God's love, emanating from God to shine the light of God's love everywhere. Enraptured by the divine force of nature, Hildegard taught that we are created to live in shalom, a vibrant interdependence of mind, body, and spirit that springs out of the transcendent union of the divine and the human. In 2012, Hildegard was canonized and named a Doctor of the Church by Pope Benedict XVI. Benedict prayed that the Holy Spirit would raise up people "like Saint Hildegard of Bingen who, developing the gifts they have received from God, make their own special and valuable contribution to the spiritual development of our communities..." May the Spirit do so!