



Trinity Together

Trinity Lutheran Church

357 West Main Street
Kutztown, Pennsylvania 19530

June 2023

Transitional Pastor: The Rev. Dr. Dennis Ritter	484-529-7801	dsritter@ptd.net
Director of Youth & Family Ministry: Seth Noggle	570-529-2325	Seth.noggle@gmail.com
Editor/Administrative Assistant: Diane Spohn	610-683-3450	office@trinitykutztown.com
Director of Music: Bruce Rohrbach	610-683-9496	brhrbch@hometownnu.com
Tech & Media Specialist: Brandon Wood	484-629-9332	bwood2016@gmail.com
Financial Secretary: Mike Sailsbery	412-849-5255	finsectrinity@hotmail.com
Giving Bookkeeper: Lisa Finke	610-349-2325	lmfinke@msn.com

Mission Statement:

“The mission of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church is to equip God’s people to do God’s work and bring good news to hungry people.”

Church Office Hours:

Tuesday through Friday 9:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Phone: 610-683-3450

Website: www.trinitykutztown.com

Sunday Worship Service at 9:30 AM

Adult Sunday School at 8:00 AM

Good News Club on summer break

2023 Church Council Members

Jeff Collier	Property
Joseph Jedwab	Christian Education
Jessica Miller	Treasurer, Finance and Stewardship
Mary Neuenschwander	Personnel
Ed Rakowiecki	Vice President, Personnel
Dan Raudenbush	President, Endowment
Ann Towne	Mission/Service
Jean Wagner	Worship Life
Alicia Wood	Secretary, Fellowship

From the Pastor...

Dear Disciples in Christ,

Back on the 14th of May I preached a sermon focused upon our human community's failure to live up to its role as God's stewards of creation. The sermon focused upon how we got into this predicament and specific illustrations of how we, as members of the human community, have failed to be good stewards. However, other than lifting up the hope of God's grace being manifested in each of us and the closing tag line, "We need to learn how to live more simply so that all of God's creatures may simply live." the sermon was short on remedies. What can we do better to care for God's good creation as the stewards God intended us to be? Here are some of my thoughts.

First, we need to become advocates for clean energy solutions to power our contemporary life. Solar, wind and other renewable resources need to replace our over reliance on fossil fuels. This will happen as we let our legislators and businesses know that we want them to enact legislation and adopt business models that are increasingly carbon neutral.

Second, each one of us needs to do things to reduce our individual carbon & methane footprints.

1. Work to curtail and even end your use of products packaged in single use plastic containers, i.e.: bottled water, fast-food drink cups and straws, styrofoam containers?
2. When you enter the market for a new car, truck, mower, trimmer, etc. consider buying a hybrid or fully electric alternative. There is a growing number of alternatives out there.
3. If you own a house or business, consider installing solar, geo-thermal or other clean energy solutions to electrify, heat and cool your house or business.
4. Reduce your waste, especially organic waste, and if you can't look for businesses that operate anaerobic digesters that turn food and other organic waste into methane fuel that can generate electricity or other forms of power (the state of Massachusetts has taken some serious steps in this regard).

Third, start a vegetable garden in your back yard or grow some tomato, pepper or bean plants in pots on your balcony, porch or patio. Buy produce that is grown locally and that was grown using organic farming methods whenever you can.

Fourth, join and financially support organizations such as our ELCA advocacy ministry, the Nature Conservancy, Sierra Club, Audubon Society, Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, World Wildlife Fund, Rainforest Alliance, Friends of the Earth and Global Footprint Network which are just some of the many organizations that seek to address issues regarding our human stewardship of God's good creation.

Fifth, invite/encourage friends, neighbors and extended family to join you in these endeavors.

Together in small and large ways we can end our seemingly headlong rush towards the utter degradation of the earth and possibly our own extinction. Generations yet unborn will thank you.

Blessings and Peace,

Pastor Ritter



Schedule & Volunteers

ASSISTING MINISTERS:

June 4	9:30 AM	Carolyn Miller
June 11	9:30 AM	Susan Mangold
June 18	9:30 AM	Dan Raudenbush
June 25	9:30 AM	Alicia Wood

LAY READERS:

June 4	9:30 AM	Carolyn Miller
June 11	9:30 AM	Susan Mangold
June 18	9:30 AM	Dan Raudenbush
June 25	9:30 AM	Alicia Wood

ACOLYTES:

June 4	9:30 AM	Liam Miller
June 11	9:30 AM	Isaac Jedwab
June 18	9:30 AM	Liam Miller
June 25	9:30 AM	Isaac Jedwab

USHERS/GREETERS:

June 4	9:30 AM	Donna Keglovits and Melanie Wessner
June 11	9:30 AM	Amy Pfeiler-Wunder and Doug Wunder
June 18	9:30 AM	Linda Geiring and Michele Zimmerman
June 25	9:30 AM	Sue and Jeff Collier

TECH COORDINATORS:

June 4	9:30 AM	Will Towne
June 11	9:30 AM	Will Towne
June 18	9:30 AM	Kellen Cunningham
June 25	9:30 AM	Brandon Wood

MONEY COUNTERS: Steve Finke and Melanie Wessner

FLOWER CHAIRPERSON: Donna Keglovits

ALTAR COMMITTEE: Linda Geiring and Nancy Konemann

Committee Meeting Dates...

Worship Life	Tuesday, June 6, at 7 p.m.
Church Council	Tuesday, June 13, at 7 p.m.

From the Church Office...

Deadline for articles for the July/August newsletter is Tuesday, June 20th.

Please note: To email the church office, please use the address: office@trinitykutztown.com

From the Finance Committee...

Approved 2023 Budget --	\$339,983
Unrestricted income through Apr.	\$ 87,978
Expenditures through Apr.	\$107,624
Balance through Apr.	\$ (19,646)
Average monthly offering	\$ 20,890

Christian Education...

Adult Sunday School

The Adult Sunday School Class welcomes you to join us in enjoying “The Righteous Reign of God,” a program that invites us to understand God’s power in our lives. We will explore the theme of kingdom in historic and modern times. First, we consider Old Testament references to God as king over all the earth: a powerful and peaceful reign, a servant king and God’s appointed king. Second, we will explore Jesus’ kingdom teachings in Matthew. Third, we will explore the implications of life under God’s authority, God at work in us, and Christ as the exulted ruler. Rev. Catherine Malotsky, an ELCA pastor and teacher, will help us use intellectual, emotional and spiritual tools to investigate nuanced and faith-inspiring ways of understanding God’s power in our lives. Please join us Sundays at 8:00 am in the Parlor for discussion, coffee and fellowship.

Good News Club!

The Good News Club, our Sunday School Ministry for those in Kindergarten through 5th Grade, is on a summer break – see you in the Fall!

Bible Study

Bible Study is on Thursdays at 10:00 AM. They are led by either Pr. Ritter or Seth Noggle and are based on the upcoming Sunday's scripture reading(s). You can join the Bible study group in-person or on Zoom. To join the group electronically use the Zoom platform. Here's the Zoom link to click:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84530518506> To dial-in by phone, call this number: 1 301-715-8592. Then, when you are prompted, enter this Meeting ID number: 845 3051 8506. No other password is needed.

"Monumental" Vacation Bible School

The combined Trinity and St. Paul's UCC VBS, "Monumental: Celebrating God's Greatness," will be held at Trinity July 30 to August 3 from 6-8:30 p.m. Registration forms are located in the back of the church and in this newsletter as well. We also need adult and older youth helpers! Please see Seth for more information or questions.

Youth News...

June Schedule for our Youth Groups

My E-mail is seth.noggle@gmail.com if you would like to E-mail me and ask to be on the youth group list. That's the best way to be updated on Youth Group activities.

June 4th – at Trinity

Primary Youth Group (K-6th)
Time: 4:30 – 6:00 PM

Secondary Youth Group (8th-12th)
Time: 6:00 – 8:00 PM

June 11th – at St. John's

Primary Youth Group (K-6th)
Time: 4:30 – 6:00 PM

Secondary Youth Group (8th-12th)
Time: 6:00 – 8:00 PM

June 18th No scheduled Youth Group Happy Father's Day!

June 25th – at Trinity (DnD Night)

Primary Youth Group (K-6th)
Time: 4:00 – 6:00 PM

Secondary Youth Group (8th-12th)
Time: 6:00 – 8:30 PM

Upcoming Events...

Graduates Recognition

On Sunday, June 4th, we will honor anyone who has graduated from high school, college, a graduate program or a trade school since July 2022. Graduates, we hope you are able to join us at the 9:30 AM church service on June 4th so we can wish you Godspeed in your future endeavors!

Kutztown Kitchen

The next Kutztown Kitchen community meal will be on Sunday, June 25th, from 4:30-6:00 p.m. For questions or to request a ride or delivery, please call Ann Towne at 484-239-5314 or the church office.

Folk Festival Worship, July 9th

Sunday, July 9th, we will be moving our worship to the Kutztown Fairgrounds main stage as part of the 2023 Folk Festival. Worship will begin at 9 AM that morning and will recall the history of our Lutheran ancestors who initially settled in this area. Invite friends and family to join you for a day at the Folk Festival and an opportunity to journey back in time. Seth will be our preacher and Pr. Ritter will serve as the liturgist. There will not be any livestreaming that week, and Trinity's sanctuary will be quiet.

What's the Future of Rostered Ministry...

In March 2022 a diverse group was appointed to examine and improve the candidacy process that equips rostered ministers for service in our church. This team is the Candidacy Leadership Development Working Group (CLDWG.)

In the last year we have spent much of our time hosting virtual and in-person listening sessions to learn the needs of our church. We also completed a survey for those excluded by the candidacy process. As we move forward, the working group is prioritizing feedback from our church.

All members of the ELCA are invited to hearings at which the working group will share its findings. There will also be an opportunity for response. For more details, go to <https://elca.org/FORMATION>

The hearings will be hosted via Zoom. Please mark your calendars for one of the following:

- June 20, 7 p.m. Eastern
- June 22, 1 p.m. Eastern
- June 26, 2 p.m. Eastern
- June 28, 10 p.m. Eastern

Rejoicing Spirits Ecumenical Community Ministry...

The next Rejoicing Spirits of Eastern Berks County service is at 3:00 pm, Sunday, June 4, 2023, at St. Paul's UCC, 47 S. Whiteoak Street, Kutztown, PA 19530. All are welcome at this no-shush worship that enriches the lives of all people, especially those with disabilities. We meet the first Sunday of every month, at 3:00 pm at St. Paul's UCC, Kutztown. For more information, contact: Charlene Fisher (charf1sh@verizon.net, 610-223-9822) or Erin Webb (emwebb05@aol.com, 610-894-9949)

How You Can Help...

Summer Fellowship Opportunities

We would like to once again this summer have light refreshments after the worship service. If you can bring some cool liquid refreshment and simple finger snacks anytime over the summer, please sign up on the sheet on the bulletin board or on the following Goggle Docs spreadsheet:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1B-1n9Pe3Lxuan2Lw-hj8fSW01LH3X0thSdFpvawwP-s/edit?usp=sharing>

Student Food Pantry at KU

Thank you to everyone who has contributed time, groceries, and cash donations to this ministry. If you would like to contribute food items, please see the list below...

Peanut Butter	Juice
Miscellaneous Snacks	Crackers
Knorr Side Dish Packets	Cereal
Instant Potato Packets	Breakfast Bars
Toiletries	Mac 'n Cheese
Soup	Tuna
Canned Fruits & Veggies	Pasta

There is a box outside of the Parlor for the items you are donating. If you have any questions about this program, please contact the church office.

Tower Health Volunteer Opportunities

Tower Health invites anyone willing to volunteer time and service for their Home Health and Hospice at-home services to contact Jamie Moore, Bereavement/Volunteer Coordinator at 484-659-6478 or

Jamie.moore@towerhealth.org.

Areas of need include:

- In-home companion
- Bereavement volunteer
- Office administrative support
- Music, art, massage, Reiki or pet therapy
- Cosmetology
- Special projects volunteer

Spring Care Packages...

Our Trinity youth enrolled in higher education programs have finished their studies for this school year. Trinity's Mission Committee mailed out 22 Study Care Packages. We also mailed out three care packages to our military in honor of Armed Forces Day. **Many, many thanks** to all those who contributed toward these packages.

Rita Robertson and Lisa Finke

This is a list of students and their colleges and universities:

Nicole Angelisanti – Berkeley
Vianna "V" Brydon – KU
Sarah Bubbenmoyer – Penn State
Soni Diaz – KU
Elizabeth Diehl – Cedar Crest College
Brody Graff – Marywood College
Elena Graff – KU
Melody Inostroza – KU
Owen Kulp – University of Pittsburgh
Evie Mace – Oxford England
Julia Mace – Hofstra
Meredith Mace – Bloomsburg University
Hannah Nicholson – West Chest University
Dr. Anna Owen – Medical Resident, Forbes Hospital
Natalie Reitzes - KU
Ramsi Ross – KU
Abby Ryan – Piedmont College
Scott Sanders – Reading Area Community College
Rachel Towne – NYU
Dr. Sam Towne – Medical Resident, NYC
Jonathan Weinrich – KU
Ashley Wentzel – Alvernia College
Dr. Patrick Wise – Medical Residency, Sacramento, CA

Our Military for Armed Forces Day:

Keefe DePue
John Julian
Kristiana Buschan Emmanuel
Patrick Wise

A Stewardship Moment...

With rising interest rates and inflation, if you are 65 or older, now might be a good time to consider a charitable annuity. It can serve to produce current income for you and upon your death a legacy gift to Trinity. In addition, when you create the annuity, it will serve to reduce your tax liability for that year. For more information you can talk to a financial planner, or you can contact the ELCA Foundation for assistance in this regard.

Recently, Trinity received a special gift of some appreciated stock from a member of the congregation towards its campaign to raise funds to improve the accessibility of its facilities for individuals who deal with reduced mobility. This type of gift not only provides some tax benefits for the giver, but it also serves to support important initiatives of our congregation or can increase Trinity's endowment which will support its current and future ministries.

Finally, another possible gifting opportunity with tax reduction implications is gifting a portion of your IRA. Gifts up to \$100,000 can be made from an IRA to a charitable entity such as Trinity. Again, you should talk to your financial planner/advisor or the folks at the ELCA Foundation for assistance in this regard.

Flower Sponsors...

The following dates are available for flower sponsors:

June 4 and 18	September 3 and 17
July 30	October 8 and 22
August 27 (Bowers)	December 31

We also need monthly flower chairpersons for the months of July, September, October, and November.

To sponsor flowers or volunteer to be flower chairperson for a month, please call Darlene Dietrich at 610-683-7975, sign up on the flower chart on the bulletin board, or call the church office at 610-683-3450.

Interested in Joining Trinity...

On Sunday, May 14, Mother's Day, we received 4 new members into our fellowship at Trinity. The individuals were Bonnie McCall, Noelle McCall, Natalie Reitzes and Patrice Tritt. Please extend a warm Trinity welcome when you see them.

If you or someone you know is interested in becoming a member of our congregation, please contact Pr. Ritter. New members will be received as the opportunity to do so arises.

Thank You Notes...

(Text to Rita Robertson from Kathy Buschan Emmanuel)

Thank you for your box for Armed Forces Day. It was a surprise.

Dear People of Trinity,

Thank you for your generous gift to our neighbors in Turkiye. Your love is being put to work right away providing shelter, food, and hope to families who have lost everything. I'm so grateful for your partnership in this work.

In gratitude,

Emma Wagner

Lutheran World Relief

ELCA Young Adult Vocational Fellowship...

The ELCA Young Adult Vocational Fellowship is a one-year discernment experience at the intersection of vocation, faith community building, and professional development. Young adults will explore employment that is meaningful, empowering, and reflects the values of their faith. The fellows will work at an ELCA partner organization for 9-12 months, gaining professional experience that is unique to each site. While similar to an internship or gap-year program involving vocational experience, this fellowship will offer a full-time salary and benefits. For more information, please go to:

<https://www.elca.church/vocational-fellowship>

From Bear Creek Camp Newsletter

"Mom! I'm in a kayak!" echoed out from a boy in the middle of the lake. As I was lifeguarding for a recent retreat group, this one simple moment was an excellent reminder of the power of what can happen through experiences at Bear Creek Camp.

For this young person, getting into a kayak for the very first time was a big deal. He started out unsure of how to paddle, testing different grips, figuring out where in the water to position the blade, and generally going through trial and error that started with lots of circles, but eventually developed into an understanding of how to make the boat go where he wanted it to. He spent nearly two hours that afternoon experimenting and I even heard him giving some tips to other boaters.

As I helped him onto the shore, he was so proud to tell me "That was my first time on a boat and I was getting pretty good!" I gave a fist bump and told him that I was impressed with how much he had learned. And then he said, "I can't wait to do that again!"

This summer, our community will foster so many of those "I can't wait to do that again"-moments at the lake, on the high ropes course, in the arts & crafts room, while camping on an overnight, in bible study & worship, and in simply being away from home and building a new community of peers.

From summer staff to camper parents to church leaders to financial donors and of course our entire community of prayerful supporters, together we are creating opportunities for campers to try new things and to learn and experiment to grow their skills and expand their comfort zones.

We're looking forward to an incredible summer. Thanks for being part of our work together.

-Collin Grooms, Executive Director

Community Events...

Young At Heart Seniors

Young at Heart Seniors meets every third Wednesday of the month at St. Paul's UCC, 47 South Whiteoak Street, Kutztown. For more information, call Barbara at 610-683-3393 or via email at office@stpaulskutztown.org

Better With Age

The Kutztown Community Library hosts Better With Age the third Friday of each month at 10 a.m. at the library, located at 70 Bieber Alley, Kutztown. The next session will be June 16th on the topic of "Medicare Basics." No registration is required.

Other Kutztown Community Library programs in June that do require registration include:

- June 9th at 10 a.m., Gentle Chair Yoga (\$10 paid at time of class)
- June 19th at 12:30 p.m., Midday Mindfulness (donation appreciated)

Register for these classes in the library or on the events calendar on their website: kutztownlibrary.org

Concert Series in the Kutztown Park Band Shell

The 2023 Concert Series in the Kutztown Park has kicked off. For the full schedule of events, please see the poster on the bulletin board at church or on the Kutztown Borough website. The June performances are:

- June 3: The Ben Mauger Band at 7 PM
- June 13: Flag Day Celebration at 7:30 PM
- June 17: The Mudflaps at 7 PM
- June 24: The Cramer Brothers at 7 PM

Grace Notes Gospel Big Band Concert

St. Paul's UCC presents Grace Notes Gospel Big Band at the Kutztown Park Bandshell on Thursday, June 15th, at 7:00 p.m. A freewill offering will be accepted.



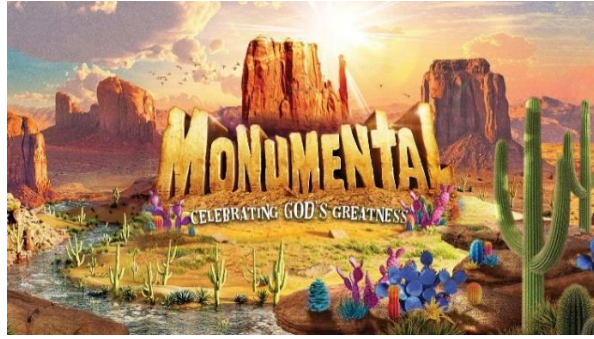
The Wall That Heals, a three-quarter scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial along with a mobile Education Center, is coming to Kutztown on September 21 through September 24, 2023 at the Timothy Breidegam Baseball Field located in Kutztown Park and will be open 24 hours a day and free to the public. *The Wall That Heals* honors the more than three million Americans who served in the U.S. Armed forces in the Vietnam War and it bears the names of the 58,281 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam. There is a need for many volunteers during the time *The Wall That Heals* will be in Kutztown. Sign up online at:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0945a4ab28a4fac25-thewall2#/>

Safe Berks Walk

On Saturday, June 17, from 9-11 a.m. Safe Berks is having a Walk for No More domestic violence. You can start a team, join a team, or participate as an individual fundraiser. If you register by June 1st you will receive a free T-shirt. For additional information, email walk@safeberks.org, call 610.373.1206 ext. 115 or visit:

www.SafeBerks.org/WalkForNOMORE



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL 2023:
"MONUMENTAL"

July 30-Aug. 3 (Sunday-Thursday) 6:00-8:30 p.m.
at Trinity Lutheran Church (Kutztown)

The Trinity/St. Paul's Combined VBS Program is back for another fun summer in-person program: "Monumental: Celebrating God's Greatness" as we wander through the desert landscape of the southwestern United States. Please plan to preregister as soon as possible by completing the attached form or contacting Seth Noggle at 570-529-2325 or seth.noggle@gmail.com or Louise Moyer at 610-641-0507 or LouiseMoyer13@gmail.com. Children from preschool thru Grade 6 will have a blast! We are also looking for adult and older youth helpers. There is no charge for the program. Come and celebrate God's Greatness with us!_____

"MONUMENTAL" VBS at Trinity (Kutztown)

Child's Name: _____ Child's Age & Grade Next Yr: ____/____

Parent's Name: _____ Parent's Phone: _____

Emergency Contact Phone Number (during VBS): _____

Parent's Email Address: _____

I am willing to help by:

- Station Leader Rotating with Classes Set-Up Decorations
 Station Helper Registration/Check-In

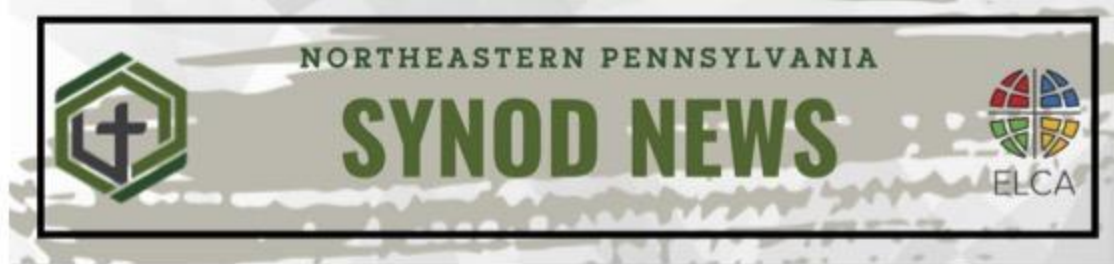


June 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 8:00am Adult Sunday School 9:30am Worship: Holy Communion (In-person & Zoom) 10:45am Confirmation Class 4:30pm Kutztown Kitchen Community Meal 7:00pm SA Meeting	29 Memorial Day Office Closed	30	31 2:00pm Bible Study-Rita Lieb	1 10:00am Bible Study 7:00pm AA Meeting 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	2 7:00pm AA Meeting	3
4 8:00am Adult Sunday School 9:30am Worship: Holy Communion (In-person & Zoom) - Honor Graduates 3:00pm Rejoicing Spirits Worship Service at St. Paul's UCC 4:30pm Primary Youth Group at Trinity 6:00pm Secondary Youth Group at Trinity 7:00pm SA Meeting	5 Office Closed	6 7:00pm Worship Life Committee Meeting	7 2:00pm Bible Study-Rita Lieb	8 10:00am Bible Study 7:00pm AA Meeting 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	9 7:00pm AA Meeting	10
11 8:00am Adult Sunday School 9:30am Worship: Holy Communion (In-person & Zoom) 4:30pm Primary Youth Group at St. John's 6:00pm Secondary Youth Group at St. John's 7:00pm SA Meeting	12 Office Closed	13 7:00pm Council Meeting	14 2:00pm Bible Study-Rita Lieb	15 10:00am Bible Study 7:00pm AA Meeting 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	16 7:00pm AA Meeting	17
18 8:00am Adult Sunday School 9:30am Worship: Holy Communion (In-person & Zoom) 7:00pm SA Meeting	19 Office Closed	20	21 2:00pm Bible Study-Rita Lieb	22 10:00am Bible Study 7:00pm AA Meeting 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	23 7:00pm AA Meeting	24
25 8:00am Adult Sunday School 9:30am Worship: Holy Communion (In-person & Zoom) 4:00pm Primary Youth Group at Trinity 4:30pm Kutztown Kitchen Community Meal 6:00pm Secondary Youth Group at Trinity 7:00pm SA Meeting	26 Office Closed	27	28 2:00pm Bible Study-Rita Lieb	29 10:00am Bible Study 7:00pm AA Meeting 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	30 7:00pm AA Meeting	1



SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2 Bonnie McCall	3 Anita Burkhart Rebecca Gilligan
4 Alan Robertson Lee Shannon	5 Michael Moyer Lucille Bubbenmoyer	6 Jan Bond	7 Michael Reffie III Owen Keglovits	8 Andrea Orwig Gayle Sanders Bennett Collier	9 Alice Rahn	10 Jim Johnson Mike Walter
11	12 Randy Heffner Elizabeth Diehl	13 David Loeb	14 Gary Bond Eric Bubbenmoyer	15 Nancy Plushanski Colton Ziegler	16	17 Sarah Rosborough Beau deForest
18	19 Mary Neuenschwander	20 Jack D'Andrea	21 Kylie Ziegler	22 Erica Parker	23	24 Helene Fuesle Alicia Wood
25 Cayden Finke	26 Anna Owen Jean Heck	27	28 Stephen Esser	29 Brett von Bergen	30 Todd Ziegler	



WE MATTER TO THE WHOLE CHURCH: A STORY FROM OUR SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD

Being a member of a congregation council is significant in the life of a disciple. Serving as a leader in a congregation is rewarding, terrifying, awe-inspiring and messy. You are among friends, family and your community of believers, and are chosen to lead in your congregation. It's just a few times a month, but as Barbara Nugent, a synod vice president, shares, "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?"

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod provided that direction in February when it offered training to 70 congregational lay leaders that strengthened each person's skills and faith. From evangelism to the ELCA constitution and bylaws, they gathered to meet the passions and needs, offering workshops with special breakouts for presidents, vice presidents, secretaries and treasurers that covered such topics as worship and music, communications, advocacy, stewardship and social justice/anti-racism. The day started with Bishop Kurt Kusserow encouraging these valued leaders to keep the focus on our purpose:

“Your leadership in the life of your congregation ought always to bear in mind that your congregation finds its fulfillment in the universal church, and that the universal church exists in and through congregations such as yours. I think this means addressing local questions and concerns in the life of your congregation as if they matter to the whole church (because they do).”

Everyone was hungry to gather ideas, consider future steps but also have an opportunity to connect, be empowered, feel valued and cared for and remember the excitement of being church. Rev. Melissa Stoller, director for evangelical mission, said it this way: “The day was a very visible yet not necessarily quantifiable force that we are church together. Wandering but not alone. Feeling worry, power, uncertainty, and joy as one.” Central to this gathering was living into the mission of this synod “to serve, connect and equip congregations of the SWPA synod to tell the story of Jesus.” Everyone knew that the synod was there for the congregations with staff, volunteers and greater church support, not only this day but in the days to come, and synod staff are supported through the generous mission support of congregations allowing them to be there for our leaders. One leading Scripture for the day reminded each leader of their value: “Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word” (Acts 6:3-4). Hoping each of our synods are seeking ways that work for them to encourage and empower congregational leaders. Knowing that we are church together, church that supports each other across the whole church prayerfully, financially, emotionally and with a hope for renewal.



Our Synod has PRIDE



June is Pride Month which celebrates LGBTQIA+ folx and their many achievements.

Although injustices and prejudices still exist within our society, we have made great strides since the Stonewall Riots in 1969, attaining marriage equality. However, as previously mentioned, we still have a long way to go in the struggle for equal rights. By learning about LGBTQ Pride/History Month, congregational members are more likely to have an understanding and acceptance for all individuals, no matter what they look like, what gender they do or don't identify as, and who they love. Consider celebrating PRIDE in your congregation!