

# Wayfarer

STORIES FROM THE ROAD.

THE CHURCH  
IS STILL  
OPEN

THE BUILDING  
IS CLOSED

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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 by Joshua Eckstein  
Edited by SWPA Synod

*Peace I leave with you; my  
peace I give to you. I do not  
give to you as the world gives.  
Do not let your hearts be  
troubled, and do not let them  
be afraid (John 14:27).*

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## SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD

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# EVEN AT THE GRAVE... ALLELUIA!



**Bishop Kurt F. Kusserow**

Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Bishop

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**E**ven at the grave we make our song: Alleluia! When I first heard this phrase, I was both startled and encouraged by it. The promise of Easter gives our faith a boldness that dares to sing praise to God even in the face of death. More than this, our faith dares to name death out loud.

The roots of this faith tradition are very, very old, reaching back at least in literary setting to the Exile of the sixth century B.C.E., for it is found in the courageous witness of the three young men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (or to use their Hebrew names, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah). Faced with denying their faith or being thrown into the fiery furnace, these three declared, "if our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire and out of your hand, O king, let him deliver us. But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods and we will not worship the golden statue that you have set up." (Daniel 3:17-18)

They were delivered from the fiery furnace, of course. But notice their clear word of recognition, that God's people are not always delivered from death, and that if the fiery furnace would bring their demise, even then, in their dying they would not cease to glorify God.

Like these three heroes of the faith, our synod has three congregations which had planned to hold their final liturgies at Easter this year: Grace, Crescent, on Easter Day; Trinity, New Brighton, the next Sunday; and Redeemer, Carrick, on the Third Sunday of Easter. **Closing a congregation can be like a funeral liturgy; we grieve a loss and bear that grief deeply in our hearts. And yet, each of these congregations has made the**

## **decision to close as an expression of their faithful stewardship of the Gospel ministry.**

In consultation with their pastors and with me, they determined to sing their alleluias even at their closing, and scheduled their last liturgies as Easter unfolds in order to do so with all the more confidence.

But now, the restrictions against gathering in assembly that were put in place to combat the spread of the coronavirus have put their plans on hold. As if having to close a congregation is not difficult enough, the members of these congregations and their pastoral and lay leadership face an additional challenge similar to what families who experience a death these days are facing. There may be a funeral, there may be a memorial liturgy in the future, or none of these things may take place. With undaunted faith, each of these congregations is looking to care for its members and tend to the disposition of its property with creativity and thoughtfulness. Even in a global pandemic we make our song: Alleluia!

Thank you, pastors and lay leaders of these three congregations, for your encouragement and leadership. And thank you, members of Grace, Trinity, and Redeemer for many years of faithful ministry that continues to proclaim, even in your closing, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ!



## THE CHANGING CHURCH: COVID-19



**Lauren Wolcott**

*Synod Communicator*

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I remember being told a joke at my job interview for the Synod Communicator position. We were sitting around the conference room table at the Synod Office—with then-strangers who would become my teammates and partners in ministry—when the set-up came: How many Lutherans does it take to change a lightbulb? After a brief nervous chuckle, the whole table cried out in unison, “change?!?!”

It was both well executed (one of the better versions of the lightbulb joke I have heard in my day) and enlightening about the culture in which I would be embedding myself at that point in late 2018. Synod Council had made it crystal clear that of their four highest priorities, fostering creativity and openness to change made the list. Not change for the sake of change itself, but because research was showing an organizational culture of resistance having a discouraging effect on the ministers of our synod. The leadership had accepted that this would be an uphill battle, but one that council felt strongly was needed.

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, I've seen the coining of the phrase “the before times”... before everything flipped upside down at high velocity, before we forfeited meeting in sanctuaries, before we were all homebound, before when we planned summer getaways, before we were homeschooling, before grocery shopping was a two-hour sanitation event. This story of fostering creativity and openness to change sometimes feels like it belongs in the before times, along with passports and to-go mugs.

**Openness is no longer a consideration; we all have changed. Some of us with great**

**enthusiasm, some of us with great pain, but change arrived without asking our feelings on the matter.** The notion that any one of our ministers would need encouragement toward creativity also sounds absurd in May of 2020 in a way that it did not as recently as February. I have witnessed an explosion of creativity everywhere I look, including within our synod, in ways that are unexpected, brave, beautiful, and downright breathtaking.



In the before times... the path to actualizing the goal to “foster creativity and openness to change” involved ongoing and unfolding processes and a sizable crew of audacious leaders to research, plan, and take one step after another in that direction. We articulated new clarity around our mission as a synod: to serve, connect, and equip ELCA congregations in southwestern Pennsylvania to tell the story of Jesus. We met with diverse, synod-wide leadership for hours to workshop definitions of our vision, values, and services. We delegated the creation of a strategic plan around all four of Synod Council’s goals to a special task force: Dr. Wendy Farone, Tom Felmley, Pastor Sara Irwin, Jim Needles, Deacon Deb Roberts, and Pastor Jeff Schock.

We listened to ministers at cluster meetings and “communication coffee klatches” about what they felt the synod most needed and listened to their reactions to the mission and new definitions. We launched a new

website to better serve our ministers and lay leaders based significantly on those direct conversations and feedback. We also rebranded our synod to better represent who we collectively were being transformed into. The logo—the visual mark of our brand identity—was created by a local designer (David Manchester, teamAdelle studios) to be a creative interpretation of our synod’s vision: flourishing Christian communities where Jesus’ story is embodied. It depicts our region’s three rivers bursting from the pages of Holy Scripture. Along the way, Synod Council affirmed time and again: **YES**, this was their aim.



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

In the before times... signs of creativity and change were slowly, although not always subtly, beginning to be more publicly evident. Synod Assembly in its originally scheduled date was moved to take place over a weekend: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Now a seemingly moot point—assembly will be rescheduled for a date we do not yet know and likely in a different format as we keep a watchful eye on how the pandemic unfolds—the weekend plan caused a surprised and trepidatious response from many. The simple explanation for this change is to allow lay leaders with vocations outside of the Church to attend assembly and represent their congregations. The longer and less immediately satisfying end to that explanation is that we are actively shifting our culture, and this is one more visible sign of that change, which we are asking you to greet with creativity and openness.

The oddness of the times in which we

currently find ourselves, where creativity and change are the current reality, brings up speculation about what “the after times” may hold. Will we have less stress about how to provide the eucharist on one Sunday a year during a weekend assembly after having been through a prolonged season of fasting from the communion table while worshipping physically apart? Will encouraging our culture to be open and creative be less of an uphill battle and will we see a more level path ahead of us? Will it ease the exhaustion of our synod’s ministers and leaders who are eager to run that path?

The after times will be different from the before times, but I suppose the ways in which they will be different is up to each of us to decide.

**If being a synod means that we are wayfarers on the road together, how will we agree to travel together on this next leg of the journey?**

In my role on the synod staff I consider myself to be several things: a creative professional, a strategic thinker, a tenacious teammate... but one thing I am certainly not is a prophet. I do not know what the after times will be like any more than you. But what I do know is that our current times are teaching us many things about creativity and openness to change that neither myself, Synod Council, nor other synod leaders could have ever envisioned a strategy for. My hope is that, while this time is undeniably difficult, we will not waste these lessons when we begin to move into the after times.



*“Creativity in this context has meant a deeper listening to what my community is needing and wanting. Thankful that what I have heard is not a desire for slicker videos or better graphics, but simply ways to connect with one another and to hear from one another.”*

–Pastor Erin Jones  
Hot Metal Bridge Faith  
Community  
Southside Pittsburgh

*“I’ve finally developed a weekly email newsletter which includes a brief reflection/devotion, which has been fun to write. It’s more informal than my preaching style and allows me to flex some creativity. ... Practical learning: I wish I had asked my folks who live alone for contact info for their family members. I’ve had people I’ve been unable to contact at home.”*

–Pastor Kerri Clark  
Trinity Lutheran Church,  
Connellsville

*“Parishioners are feeling more connected to the body of Christ as church, than the church building. Hearing from other leaders about the ways they are ministering, is truly inspiring. There are so many leaders willing to share ideas freely and many working together.”*

–Sheri Anderson  
Staff Member  
Harrold Zion Lutheran  
Church, Greensburg

"I think as Lutherans we are terrible at and uncomfortable with evangelism and having an online presence is helping that. Our people are sharing what their church is doing with the click of a mouse."

–Deacon Amy Santoriello  
Zion Lutheran Church,  
Penn Hills

"I have needed to adapt my style of preaching to a new medium. I don't write a manuscript and get my energy in preaching from the assembled congregation. I have had to learn to get energy from the perceived congregation as I preach to a camera lens on a phone."

–Pastor Bill Schaefer  
Prince of Peace Lutheran  
Church, Latrobe

"Not a new lesson, but a reminder: A few words and a few minutes from someone who cares can mean a great deal to someone and have really nourishing effects."

–Pastor Sarah Rossing  
St. James Lutheran Church,  
Youngstown

"Not letting a 'can't do it' mindset prevail but rather look for a workaround to help make ministry continue to happen despite the social distancing orders."

–Linda Slatt  
Staff Member  
Trinity Lutheran Church, Wexford

"We needed to fast track the goal for this year of developing a prayer ministry."

–Judi Rogers  
Council Member  
St. John's Lutheran Church, North  
Versailles

"I've learned to find ways to incorporate both being a dad and a pastor into what I can. My members have enjoyed seeing me as both in the modified evening prayer that I live stream with my son via Facebook from our home."

–Pastor Ryan Kobert  
St. Paul's Lutheran Church,  
Sewickley

"When we return, we will review each of our events before starting them up again to see if they align with our mission or are just something we've gotten into the habit of doing."

–Pastor Sherry Hazuda  
Holy Trinity Lutheran  
Church, Beechview

"I am now learning from people what they need and miss. Lately I have been excited to hear from homebound members who can see worship on Facebook and involving the kids by asking for photos of them doing something that I can build on for a children's message"

–Pastor Allyn Itterly  
Prince of Peace Lutheran  
Church, Pleasant Hills

## ELCA WORLD HUNGER'S DAILY BREAD GRANTS

As part of the ELCA's response to the Covid-19 pandemic, these grants were made available to feeding ministries as they work toward a just world where all are fed.

Southwestern Pennsylvania Recipients:

HOUSE OF PRAYER, ALIQUIPPA  
ZION, PENN HILLS

ENGLISH, ZELIENOPE  
ST. MARK, BROOKLINE



## COLLABORATIVE CONFIRMATION



**Pastor Ryan Pusch**

*Dean of Conference 3 & Pastor of Hebron / St. Paul Highfield*  
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**H**ow do we differentiate the way we teach about Jesus from teaching anything else? Sometimes there isn't much difference in pedagogy. The pastor lays down truths about God, and students internalize the facts—often in long chunks of memorized text. Students then demonstrate their comprehension by writing faith statements which repeat what they learned—adding some details from their lives. But teaching Jesus doesn't touch hearts if it is only about checking boxes off a list.

On the other hand, in seventh grade, confirmation class saved my life. I was bullied in middle school, and confirmation gave me an alternative, loving community to belong to that was, by the grace of God, exempt from the tyranny of toxic masculinity. Trinity Lutheran Church in West Bend, Wisconsin, was led by Pastors Terry Berg and David and Cristy Schoob, who openly and unapologetically proclaimed the love of Jesus for all people, including our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters in Christ. This was no small thing for 1998, especially for me, since the bullying I faced was poisoned by homophobia. In utter opposition to my school yard terror, the church offered me a place where I could stop

worrying about how I was perceived by my peers and simply know that I belonged there, was accepted by them, and then some.

This is one way that teaching Jesus must always be differentiated from teaching other subjects—it must tap into our very own sense of belonging and acceptance. My context now, in Leechburg and Vandergrift, co-teaching a much smaller group of students with Pastor Jim Arter, feels like another world compared to Trinity, and it is! **But if what we claim about the Holy Spirit is true—that we are called, gathered, enlightened, and empowered by Her gifts—then indeed, God has called Jim and me to be confirmation**



**teachers here in this place, and for these kids.** When you teach Jesus, it not only matters who is teaching and who is learning, but Jesus cannot be separated from the personal stories of those who teach and those who learn.

Yes, of course confirmation class often follows a curriculum, and those can be useful tools, but if it doesn't involve who I am, who Jim is, and who each of our students are, then we're not really teaching Jesus, we're just teaching an abstract concept of Lutheran faith.

Jim brings his life experience of growing up in Pennsylvania in a conservative Lutheran church, discovering that God's love is infinite and eternal, and that he too was called by that love to follow Jesus and serve God's people. Jim has been through the two-year confirmation rotation of scripture and catechism several times, and can articulate the deep lessons of our faith in ways that get to the heart of our identity as disciples.

I bring and draw from my experience working with young people in the context of public schools and summer programs, which has taught me to try to meet young people where they are coming from. Moreover, it has become clear to me that each of us must draw from our passions, from our experience growing up, and from the challenges we have faced, and somehow show how all of these are God's way of shaping who we are.

This was one of Fred Rogers' guiding principles as well: if you want to connect with children, reflect on your own experience as a child. Sharing our personal challenges in life demonstrates to young people that, contrary to popular belief and despite our positions of authority, we don't have all the answers for them! But it also shows that there is great opportunity, and much to be gained, in sharing our weaknesses, deep fears, and hurts with each other.

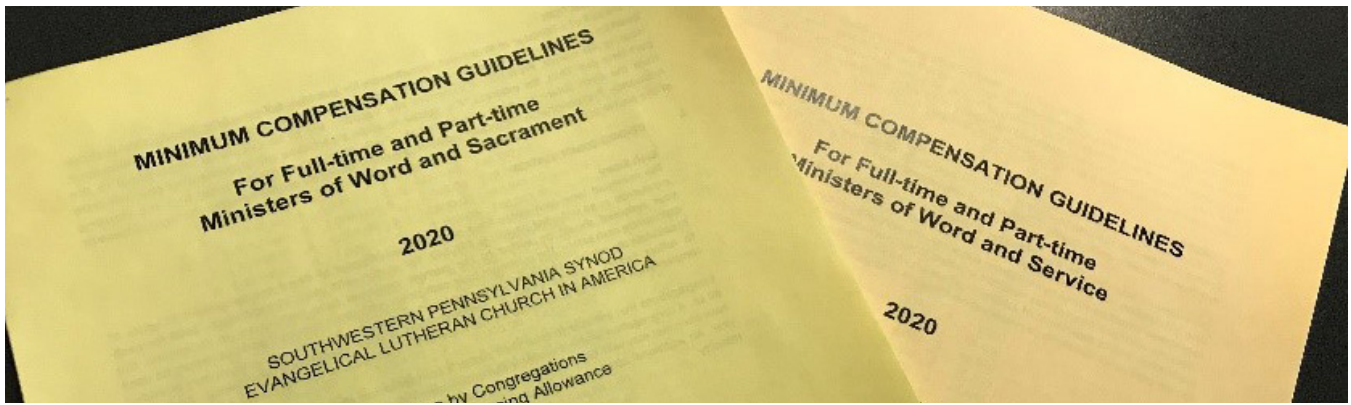
That is the path of faith, letting down our guard to one another, showing our true faces behind the masks the world has taught us to hide behind. Unfortunately this is something we often find frightening of because of our personal insecurities, and we feel much more comfortable trying to convince others that we do have all the answers. But that's teaching something far different than Christ crucified and risen, isn't it?

### **CALLING ALL COLLABORATORS:** **Want to share similar programs with your ministerium colleagues?**

- **Cluster Meetings** are a great place for ministers to share ideas and look for partnerships. Locate your nearest clergy cluster at: [swpasynod.org/clusters](http://swpasynod.org/clusters)
- **The Resource Ministry** can point you in the right direction with curriculum and model partnerships. Contact Deacon Beth Caywood [beth.caywood@swpasynod.org](mailto:beth.caywood@swpasynod.org)



Pastors Jim Arter and Ryan Pusch



## HELP WITH THE FINE PRINT



### Pastor Peter D. Asplin

*Assistant to the Bishop*

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**W**hen I was ordained as a pastor, I was excited about weddings and funerals, baptisms and communion. I was excited about teaching confirmation and preaching. I was not excited about clergy taxes, no withholding, and paying quarterlies. And I was confused about everything. And I wasn't the only one!

Recently, the synod Committee on Ministry acted to live out our synod's mission, "to serve, connect and equip" by inviting Mark Trauman, a member of St. John's Lutheran Church of Highland in McCandless to present a workshop on clergy compensation in light of tax laws. Mr. Trauman is an active leader at St. John's of Highland and at Lutheran SeniorLife. He holds a law degree and is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) and Certified Financial Planner (CFP) at Reliance Financial Advisors (Brooktree Road, Wexford), where he is the owner and a financial advisor.

Mark presented a great workshop that the lay people and clergy gathered at Trinity Wexford really appreciated. Here's what I took away from the workshop.

First, the IRS treats pastors (but not deacons) as being self-employed. So, pastors pay the full 15.3% of FICA to the IRS. That's why synod compensation guidelines include a social security reimbursement. (To look at the minimum compensation and guidelines, see [swpasynod.org/pastors](http://swpasynod.org/pastors) or [swpasynod.org/deacons](http://swpasynod.org/deacons))

During the event, we learned about the tax consequences of living in a parsonage versus receiving a housing allowance. From what I understand, evaluating the fair rental value of a parsonage is hard. A pastor might want to hire an accountant for help. For the housing allowance, it's important to remember that a pastor who has need (i.e., rehabbing their home), could ask the congregation to shift a portion of compensation from salary to housing allowance. Congregations do need to take formal action to do so, however.

Many of you may have heard that federal tax law with regard to business expenses changed significantly in 2018. I now understand that congregations should eliminate the use of an auto allowance paid to the pastor and move to a process of monthly reimbursing pastors and deacons for miles driven (57.5¢ presently.) Similarly, continuing education, books, and ministry expenses should be done by an accountable (receipts) reimbursement process. The Committee on Ministry has recommends changes to the 2021 guidelines to reflect this.



## MISSION ENDOWMENT SPOTLIGHT: WELS PROGRAM



**Pastor Melissa L. Stoller**

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People travel from around the world to experience the world-class recreation in Fayette County near Ohiopyle State Park and the surrounding wilderness. And so when Pastor Jim Engel accepted the call to serve as pastor of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Uniontown, outdoor ministry was a given. He learned, however, that for many people who lived in the area, outdoor recreation, and the river in particular, was seen as highly dangerous, and rarely a place for leisure.

Pastor Engel, along with his wife Erica, herself an avid outdoorswoman, began The Wilderness Experience, Leadership & Service (WELS) program: a six-week sampler for local youth with the kind of activities that draw people to the mountain. It was a chance to introduce youth to outdoor sports like kayaking and mountain biking, connect them with caring adults, and provide them with leadership development and job readiness skills for the future.

**WELS is open to any and all seventh and eighth graders in Fayette County. The spring and fall programs are completely free for the 20 students each session, thanks in large part to the Ethel Verney Grant administered by the Mission Endowment Fund Board of the Southwestern PA Synod.**

Alumni of the program often return to help out as mentors. "I have kids that want to come back, and we want to continue to share the story and continue to build these relationships and skills," Pastor Engel shared

when asked about next steps in the program. Because the program is open to all in Fayette County, there is a wide range of participants from many income levels, family structures, and communities. One impact of the WELS program is that it connects the graduates in meaningful ways. "Our alumni and mentors, who go to different schools and otherwise wouldn't know each other, now run into each other," says Pastor Engel.

At this writing, the public health crisis of the Covid-19 has forced WELS to cancel their spring programming; however, they hope to add the summer day program this year, with full intentions to host the next program session in the fall.

The program is run almost entirely by volunteers who provide mentorship, meals, photography, graphic design and web support. Additional help is always welcome.

Learn more at [www.welsadventure.org](http://www.welsadventure.org)



# WHY CAMPING MINISTRY MATTERS



**Pastor Lawrence Camberg**  
*Retired*

**P**astor Samuel Shaulis began the weekly campfire at Lutherlyn with the words, “Always kneel when you light a fire.” This is one of my best memories of church camping some 65+ years ago. In those days, camp was more like a week-long full-day Vacation Bible School with focus on Bible lessons, worship, sports, swimming, and activities such as crafts. It was an inspiring week of growth in faith and interaction with youth of other parishes. Often camp friendships lasted into the future. In a *Living Lutheran* article last fall it was pointed out that the first known Lutheran church camp was in the Zelenople area

I believe camp week was so important because it was the closest present-day experience to the way the Church began right after Pentecost (Acts 2:42-47). Early Christians lived together, sharing possessions and religious events. They devoted their time to apostolic teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread (communion), and prayer. In other words, church camp on steroids.

**The overall success of church camp is best illustrated by the large number of pastors and lay leaders who credit it as a key factor in their vocational choices.**

The combining of campfire lighting and the posture of prayer is a great symbol for church camping in every generation. While keeping a focus on spiritual growth and relationship

building, 21st century church camping provides more varieties of experience than “traditional” camps (equestrian, environmental education, and improving educational skills).

In addition, year-round programming is expanding. It would be great for this concept to grow even more.

Another important aspect is a focus on providing campships, especially for urban youth. Both of the camps in our synod, Agapé and Lutherlyn, as well as many congregations, say that any youth who asks will be assisted in paying the cost of camp, even the full cost for the most needy. We are grateful for those who include camps in their giving.

# CAMP AGAPÉ UPDATE



## Deacon Rick Frederick

*Camp Agapé Executive Director*  
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**S**ummer 2020 and beyond! In the movie *Toy Story*, Buzz Lightyear's tag line was, "to infinity and beyond." I was never clear what was beyond infinity and during the recent turmoil caused by the Covid-19 virus our present day seems to change by the minute, so planning more than a couple of days ahead is a challenge.

For many families, the relationship with a summer camp program is a key part of their lives. We here at Camp Agapé are looking for new ways to be a part of your lives as we are unsure what tomorrow will hold and what we will be able to provide based on what restrictions will be in place.

We are currently adding a new duplex cabin and year-round commercial kitchen that will take us "beyond" this summer to provide a greater opportunity for families, groups, and congregations to gather in Christ's name.

To find out more, please visit [campagape.org](http://campagape.org), find us on Facebook, or call us at 724-356-2308.

# CAMP LUTHERLYN UPDATE



## Deacon Deb Roberts

*Lutherlyn Executive Director*  
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**G**reetings from Lutherlyn! During this uncertain time, we want to assure you that our staff and board of directors are all working hard to make sure that Lutherlyn will be ready for campers and guests as soon as we are safely able to re-open. Lutherlyn remains a God-Given place to be accepted, challenged, and sent out into the world to shine with the light of Christ!

While it is not possible to "virtually" replicate camp, we do have a website with many camp resources, songs, prayers, crafts, and recipes (including Mrs. Shaulis's FAMOUS coffee cake) to help you enjoy some little reminders of Lutherlyn. Check out [lutherlyn.com/athome](http://lutherlyn.com/athome). Feel free to share the activities with your congregation, youth group, or Sunday school kids. We will continue to post updates at [lutherlyn.com](http://lutherlyn.com) and on our Facebook page (Camp Lutherlyn).

Please know that we are praying for you, our partners in ministry, and we cannot wait to welcome all of our campers and friends back to Lutherlyn for summer camp, retreats, events, adventure activities, environmental education field trips, and equestrian programs! We are so appreciative of your support and concern during this time.



Bishop Kusserow with his colleagues Dr. Sheldon Sorge of Pittsburgh Presbytery and UMC Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi at a meeting of the Christian Associates Council

## A HALF-CENTURY OF UNITY



### The Rev. Liddy Barlow

*Executive Minister, Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania*  
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In this time of Covid-19, the question takes on new relevance: can these bones live? Can the church dare to do something new? Take courage: we've done it before. **Fifty years ago, Christian Associates of Southwest Pennsylvania, chartered on April 15, 1970, became the first regional expression of unity in U.S. history to connect Catholic Christians with their Protestant and Orthodox neighbors. Believers of diverse traditions came together to build relationships and seek the common good.**

In the past half-century, Christian Associates has fulfilled the promise of its founding. We've created initiatives in jail chaplaincy, radio and television ministry, and Christian education. We've addressed the hardest challenges of our time: racism, economic collapse, natural disasters. We've made our voice heard as we've spoken out together on critical issues, and we've offered solace in times of community grief, from the crash of US Air flight 427 to the 2018 synagogue shooting. We continue to draw new perspectives and traditions into our fellowship, bridging the schisms that have troubled the church in recent decades and developing robust relationships, both ecumenical and interfaith.

The Ohio River Valley Conference of the ALC and the Western PA-West Virginia Synod of the LCA, predecessors of today's Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, were both charter members of Christian Associates. Lutheran bishops have led our Council of Bishops & Executives, including

Bishop Kenneth May, Bishop Donald McCoid, and Bishop Kurt Kusserow. Pastor Don Green served as Executive Director from 2002 until 2014. Countless others from the Synod have joined committees, volunteered for projects, worked as staff members, participated in programs, and prayed for our ministries.

We are looking forward to a grand celebration of Christian Associates' 50th anniversary as soon as we are able to gather safely. In the meantime, this September we will publish *All One in Christ Jesus: Southwest Pennsylvania Celebrates Christian Unity*, a collection of sermons and essays suitable for conversation in congregational settings. Watch for it at [casp.org/sermons](http://casp.org/sermons).

Just as the Spirit inspired our founding 50 years ago, so we believe that God leads us into a future in which all who follow Jesus might be united in friendship and service. Thanks be to God for this half-century and all that lies ahead!

# 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](mailto:sandy.delorenze@swpasynod.org) or 412-367-8222.*

## Ordination Anniversaries:

- 60 Years: Pastor Andrew Carlsson  
Pastor Richard Flock  
Pastor Philip Pfatteicher
- 55 Years: Pastor Victor Peischl  
Pastor Philip Ramstad  
Pastor John Yedlicka
- 50 Years: Pastor William Brewer Jr  
Pastor Frank Kantz
- 45 Years: Pastor Craig Hess  
Pastor Charles Lockwood
- 40 Years: Pastor Susan Schwartz
- 35 Years: Pastor Steven Broome  
Pastor Randall Marburger  
Pastor Ann Schmid  
Pastor Margaret Suhr-Barkley  
Pastor Linda Orsen Theophilus
- 30 Years: Pastor Margarethe Galbraith-Cordes  
Pastor William Henry Jr  
Pastor Annette Woodman-Howe
- 25 Years: Pastor Gregory Clagg  
Pastor Michael Reed  
Pastor Anthony Schneck
- 20 Years: Pastor Sarah Lee-Faulkner  
Pastor William Schaefer
- 15 Years: Pastor Ross Carmichael  
Pastor Freda Snyder  
Pastor Melissa Stoller
- 10 Years: Pastor Brian Chaffee

## Prayer Requests:

Pastor Janice Altenburger, Pastor Fred Heitzenroder, Pastor Cyril Hurnyak, Pastor Susan Schwartz

The most up-to-date list of prayers requests is online at: [swpasynod.org/prayer](http://swpasynod.org/prayer)

## Welcome New Treasurer:

Gary Teti, Financial Professional & Member of Penn-Zion

## New Ordination:

The Reverend Sue Devine, ordained February 15, 2020  
Serving Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries (PLUM)

*Pictured*

## Retirement:

Pastor Craig Hess  
January 12, 2020



Megan Yelley Photography

## In Memoriam:

Pastor Jack Hernstrom  
February 10, 2020

Pastor Vaughn (Arkie) Taylor  
April 22, 2020

Lay Worship Leader  
Earlyn Martz,  
April 24, 2020

# SYNOD STAFF PRESENCE | JAN-MAR 2020

Whether in the joy of celebrating milestones, the uncertainty of pastoral transitions, or the trauma of congregational crisis, the synod supports members during the biggest changes and needs. **Bishop Kusserow and Assistants, Pastors Asplin and Stoller, have been present with the following congregations during Sunday worship, council meetings, or one-on-one visits:**

Christ, Millvale  
 East Liberty, Pittsburgh  
 Emmanuel, Prospect  
 First, Downtown  
 First, Leechburg  
 Good Shepherd, Fox Chapel  
 Good Shepherd, Greensburg

Grace @ Calvary, Butler  
 Grace, Crescent  
 Holy Trinity, Beaver  
 Hope, Brighton Township  
 Nativity, Allison Park  
 Our Redeemer, McMurray  
 Perry Highway, Wexford

Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries  
 Seaman Memorial, Zelienople  
 St. Andrew, Shadyside  
 St. John Mark, Homestead  
 St. John, Connoquenessing

St. John, Mars  
 St. John, Mount Pleasant  
 St. John, North Versailles  
 St. Mary Magdalene, Wilkinsburg  
 Zion, Penn Hills  
 Zion, Coraopolis

*May*

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# Calendar of Causes

SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIAL MINISTRY PARTNERS

June



## SEMINARIAN DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT FUND

Contact Rev. Peter Asplin as liaison to the synod Committee on Ministry at [peter.asplin@swpasynod.org](mailto:peter.asplin@swpasynod.org).

July



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## *Devotional*: RETIREMENT ASSURANCE



**Barbara Debski**

*Regional Representative, Portico Benefit Services*  
[bdebski@porticobenefits.org](mailto:bdebski@porticobenefits.org)

**M**y grandfather was born in 1901. He raised a family and cared for his widowed mother through the Great Depression, loved his five grandchildren, and retired from Westinghouse in Turtle Creek, Pa., with commendations for his work building tanks during World War II. He also only lived eight years into that well-deserved retirement. My own retirement years are predicted to exceed 18, and as that time becomes more visible on my horizon, I think about my grandfather and how he probably did not wonder how he would fill his days or if he would outlive his retirement income.

Over a half-century later our vision of retirement looks a lot different. We watch commercials in which people confidently spend their golden years walking on the beach. We hear experts say that we should squirrel away enough to fund a retirement that could last two or even three decades. We read that health care in retirement will likely cost hundreds of thousands of dollars. We know there are resources available to help us plan and save and budget – and we should use them – but we may still become anxious about money, about health, about time enough.

Fortunately, we know our baptismal promise does not end with our careers. As children of God, we have assurance even if there are fewer hairs on our head our mighty God still knows how many there are, and even when smooth skin softens into wrinkles we are still as glorious as the lilies in the field. Whether your retirement is just around the corner or a far-off day on the calendar, may you find a way to embrace every day with gratitude, for we are promised God's presence, grace, and abundant blessings until the day we are welcomed into our eternal home.