

Wayfarer

STORIES FROM THE ROAD.



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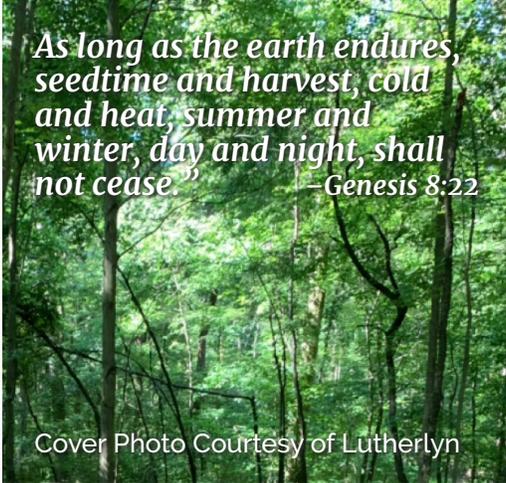
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**SOUTHWESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA
SYNOD**
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH IN AMERICA

MISSION:

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



*As long as the earth endures,
seedtime and harvest, cold
and heat, summer and
winter, day and night, shall
not cease.”* —Genesis 8:22

Cover Photo Courtesy of Lutherlyn

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SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD

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SAY THEIR NAMES: EMANUEL NINE OBSERVANCE JUNE 17, 2021



Bishop Kurt F. Kusserow

Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Bishop
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There was a little Roman Catholic congregation just outside the town of Trauger, where I last served as pastor. “Forty Martyrs” was its name. I found that name to be curious in two respects. It seemed an odd name for a church to me, and it made me curious to learn more about the saints of old for whom it was named.

My guess is that any one of us could tell stories of curious names we have encountered (whether attached to congregations or to other people) but that is not my point here. Rather, I call to mind the Forty Martyrs in writing to you about the Emanuel Nine because their tragic death was also at the hands of one who had once embraced the faith.

The forty martyrs of Sebaste were 4th century Roman soldiers serving in what is now Turkey, when Licinius was emperor over the eastern part of the Roman Empire and Constantine was emperor over the western part. Although these two men had together established the Edict of Milan that ended formal intolerance of Christianity in the Roman Empire in 313, Licinius later distanced himself from the faith and began again to incite the persecution of Christians in the east. The Forty Martyrs died

because they self-identified as Christians in a time when the emperor’s personal prejudice gave space for persecution.

The Emanuel Nine were martyrs of a different kind of personal prejudice, one that causes so much damage in our day.

They were killed in their own church building on June 17, 2015, by a fellow Christian. They were professing their faith openly, not only by being in a church building and engaged in Bible study, but through the welcome they extended to him to come and join them. But unlike the Forty Martyrs, it was not the confession of their faith that made them targets of violence. It was the color of their skin. Their killer was hoping to incite a race war.

Personal prejudice against people of color continues to result in violence in this country

in our time because systems of power have given space for it to happen. Our church confesses its participation in systems of power that continue to harm people of color and seeks to repent from that complicity. Our national church has issued an apology for our historical complicity in slavery and its enduring legacy of racism in the *Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent*. Our church has named June 17 the Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine in our liturgical calendar, and we have pledged to deepen relationships with the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

These actions are all admirable and appropriate. But real change comes to systems of power when people in local communities pursue a change of heart. To that end, I strongly encourage you to make use of the ELCA's *Prayers, Litanies, and Laments for the Commemoration of the Emanuel Nine* in your home or with your congregation on June 17.

In using that prayer resource you will be invited to say the names of the Emanuel Nine:

**CLEMENTA
DEPAYNE
CYNTHIA
SUSIE
ETHEL
TYWANZA
DANIEL
SHARONDA
MYRA**

Take time when you do so to look intently at their pictures as if they were holy icons.



Clementa Pinckney



Depayne Doctor



Cynthia Hurd



Susie Jackson



Ethel Lance



Tywanza Sanders



Daniel Simmons



S. Coleman-Singleton



Myra Thompson

See in each of them the face of Christ. Name each of them as your sister or your brother in the faith. Grieve their loss, and rejoice in the blessed anticipation of reunion with them (and with the Forty Martyrs!) in that glorious day when "the redeemed of the Lord shall return and come with singing unto Zion." 💧

ON PURPOSE
Faithful & Fulfilling Lives

SYNOD ASSEMBLY 2021
Online via ZOOM

Thursday, June 10 | 7:30 - 9:30 PM
Friday, June 11 | Optional Activities TBA
Saturday, June 12 | 9 AM - 5:30 PM

SWPASYNOD.ORG/ASSEMBLY2021



ELCA Fund for Leaders

for this church and for our future



GRANT SPOTLIGHT: FUND FOR LEADERS

Jamie Ulrich

Candidate for Ministry

The ELCA Fund for Leaders is a national scholarship program that supports “students of tremendous promise attending ELCA seminaries.” Since 2000, the Fund for Leaders (FFL) has provided scholarships to seminary students to make their education more affordable and empower them to “go and serve as the church needs and the Holy Spirit leads.” Two seminarians from the SWPA Synod have recently received Fund for Leaders scholarships: W. Roger Randolph III and Jamie Ulrich. Randolph received the Federal Chaplaincy Ministries Scholarship and Ulrich received the Mission Developer Scholarship.

2ND LT. W. Roger Randolph III

*Chaplain Candidate,
Pennsylvania National Guard*



“Being an FFL recipient has changed my life by allowing me to make future decisions based on the will of the Spirit as opposed to my ability to pay off loans. It also represents a major affirmation of call for both the work I desire to do in the parish and in our nation’s armed forces. To know that

God supports my ministry not only through my home congregation (First English Evangelical Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh) and the SWPA Synod, but also through the Churchwide office, which has encouraged me to make the most of my time here at United Lutheran Seminary and as an Army Chaplain Candidate. Through FFL, I have gained a network of peers and mentors throughout the United States. These peer groups have been a wellspring for mutual support and, along with my mentors, have shown me the great diversity of practice and ministry across the ELCA.”

Jamie Ulrich

*Candidate for Word and Sacrament Ministry,
Studying at Trinity at Capital University*



“Receiving an FFL scholarship has been an incredible opportunity and significant blessing for me. As a recipient of this scholarship, my sense of call to ordained ministry in the ELCA has been both affirmed and uplifted. Being a recipient of the Mission Developer scholarship, in particular, means that church leadership identifies me as someone capable of innovation and moving the church forward in significant ways as we consider developing and redeveloping congregations throughout the ELCA. I am incredibly thankful to the FFL network and the SWPA Synod for their support, and I look forward to utilizing my education and experiences in my future career in rostered ministry.”



LUTHERAN HIGHER EDUCATION



Pastor Peter D. Asplin

Assistant to the Bishop

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My sister Leah was the center of attention that day. She was nine years younger than I, a rising sophomore in high school at the time. We were in the suburbs of Minneapolis for a wedding and all of us cousins were together for a great weekend of fun. Part of that fun was each of us five older cousins trying to convince Leah to join us in attending “our” ELCA college. Pacific Lutheran, Gustavus Adolphus, St. Olaf, Luther, and Wagner College graduates or current students crowded around her, all of us with different colored t-shirts and great stories of fun and education. She laughed with joy at the challenge of choosing for herself. Unfortunately, my sister passed away before graduating from high school, but the moment still holds joy in my heart and my memory.

Part of that joy is that we Lutheran cousins had found our own paths, and our own lives, with the support and help of generations of faithful before us who had made a commitment to providing top-quality education for future scholars. None of our grandparents were college graduates. All of our parents were (and three out of four had attended Lutheran schools).

“A commitment to excellence has distinguished Lutheran

“Thiel College is actively engaged with the network of ELCA colleges and universities across the country. Thiel’s identity and mission foregrounds its Lutheran heritage and values—even as the College welcomes students from all faith traditions. Through robust academic and co-curricular experiences, students develop an understanding of their beliefs and values.”

— *President Susan D. Traverso*

education since its inception,” notes *Rooted and Open*, a document describing the deep calling of ELCA colleges and universities. The 27 colleges and universities affiliated with the ELCA live out that commitment daily with students from around the country and around the world.

Here in Pennsylvania, we have four different Lutheran colleges: Thiel College in Greenville; Muhlenberg College in Allentown; Gettysburg College in Gettysburg; and Susquehanna

University in Selinsgrove. Lutheran Colleges are places that prioritize challenging students to think and learn about the real world, while at the same time encouraging students to recognize the blessings and calling of God in the midst of this world. Lutheran colleges and universities are places where young Christians are encouraged to worship, to pray, to learn, and to serve—and also to question, challenge, criticize and organize to make the world a better place.

Martin Luther was a university professor and, even 500 years ago, he encouraged people to ask “big questions” and to debate with passion, intelligence, and dedication. Our Lutheran Colleges and Universities continue that tradition as they encourage young adults to understand vocation—God’s calling in their lives—to involve not just the work they do (or will do) as students or teachers, as physicians or business leaders, as therapists or farmers, but also the work they live out in relationships of service, repentance and hope in the Gospel. Whether students at ELCA colleges and

universities are Lutheran or Roman Catholic, Hindu or don’t identify with any religion, what they find at these schools is challenge: think clearly and honestly about who you are and what you believe. Grapple with the differences and similarities between people, loving and respecting even those from whom

they differ. ELCA colleges and universities live out the Lutheran conviction that free inquiry leads to capable, prepared, committed people.

Lutheran theology undergirds everything our colleges and universities do, recognizing that “God ... takes the first step by reaching out to heal broken relationships, freeing people for flourishing.... Human hospitality to others overcomes the fear of exclusion (“Do I belong here?”), the feeling of unworthiness (“Am I good enough?”), and the burden of self-justification (“I’m the expert—and you’re not!”). Lutheran colleges’ and universities’ focus on hospitality, academic excellence, and service in the world grows out of God’s love for the world—and provides top-notch education to people God loves. 💧

“The seminaries of the ELCA and predecessor church bodies have always shared a strong connection to Lutheran higher education institutions in the United States.

We are grateful for the campus ministries that continue to plant the seeds of God’s calling to rostered servant leadership in the church. Thanks be to God for this continued partnership.”

— President Guy Erwin, ULS





EMBER DAYS



Pastor Melissa L. Stoller

Director for Evangelical Mission & Assistant to the Bishop
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Lenty, Pentecost, Crucifixion, Lucia. The mnemonic in old English circles was used to remind people of the Ember Days, the “yumbren” or the cycle of marking seasons and seasonal changes in the church year – the First week in Lent, the week after Pentecost, the Feast of the Holy Cross in September, and the feast of St. Lucia in December.

If you haven't heard of ember days, you are not alone. The practice has largely fallen into obscurity, yet has been renewed within the ministerium of the SWPA Synod. **It is a means for rostered leaders to pause every three months in a world that is always in transition, to engage in study, reflection, and renewal.**

In the fall of 2019, Bishop Kusserow led the ministerium in a study of the Gospel of Matthew as a part of planning for preaching, worship and education in congregational life. In 2020 it was moved online with ministerium conversations around online communion, the Gospel of Mark in uncertain times, and adaptive leadership for the church now and for a post-pandemic time. While the observance of Ember Days online has

brought the gift of scholars and practitioners who live hundreds of miles away together in one online zoom room, the hope is to observe these days in person again.

“The privilege of a leader is to frame the questions and the challenges,” said Rev. Dr. Louise Johnson, ELCA Executive for Administration, in her recent Ember Day presentation. “A time like this helps pastors and deacons ground themselves and get acquainted with the contours of change so they can help others.”

As we see God calling the church in new and different ways in a post-pandemic world, it is important in the midst of change, to build in time to reflect on the world and reframe the questions and challenges set before us. 💧

Save the Date — Next Ember Day: Thursday, May 27

“Valuable And Vulnerable: What Children In The Acts Church Can Teach Us Today”
With Rev. Dr. Amy Lindeman Allen

SYNOD SERVICES 101 CHEAT SHEET



Sandy DeLorenze

Executive Assistant to Bishop Kusserow

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These days we have so much information to keep track of. From continually evolving information on Covid, including vaccines and proper masking, to the status of school openings, to the overload of news from so many different sources, it's easy to feel overwhelmed. **If you're like me, you often have the experience of thinking, "I know I heard that somewhere, but I can't remember where!"** Fortunately, when it comes to synod information and resources, you don't have to strain your brain to remember everything. Of course, our staff is always happy to assist, but you can also turn to our synod website for many answers. Think of it as a sort of "Multi-Tool." There's most likely something on the website that will answer your question, or at least point you in the right direction.

The following is a "cheat sheet" that will hopefully provide you with some starting points for addressing your questions and needs; **you can tear out this page and keep it for those moments when you're not sure where to start.** Topics are listed in alphabetical order, followed by the menu tab and sub-menu, when applicable, in which you will find information.

SYNOD WEBSITE: WWW.SWPASYNOD.ORG

TOPIC: MENU TAB /SUB-MENU

- Advocacy:** Partners/Advocacy
- Agencies & Institutions:** Partners
- Anti-Racism Resources:** Resources/
Anti-Racism
- Background Checks:** Congregations/
Background Checks
- Bishop's Messages and Articles:** Our
Synod/Bishop's Page
- Budget, Narrative:** Congregations/Mission
Support
- Calendar:** News
- Call Processes, Profiles, and Call News:**
Ministers/Mobility & Call
- Camps:** Partners
- Campus Ministry:** Partners
- Candidacy:** Ministers/Mobility & Call -or-
Congregations/Call Process
- Cluster Meeting Information:** Ministers/
Cluster Meetings

TOPIC: MENU TAB /SUB-MENU

- Coaching:** Ministers/Continuing Education
- Commitment Report:** Congregations/
Mission Support
- Committees of the Synod:** Our Synod/
Committees
- Compensation and Leave Guidelines:**
Ministers/Pastors -or- Ministers/Deacons
- Congregations, Closing:** Congregations/
Administration/ELCA Cong. Resources
button
- Congregation Council Information:**
Congregations/Administration
- Constitution of the SWPA Synod:** Our
Synod/Synod Council
- Constitution, Model for Congregations:**
Congregations/Administration
- Contact Information for Staff:** Our Synod/
Staff
- Continuing Education:** Ministers/Continuing
Education

TOPIC: MENU TAB /SUB-MENU

Convocation, Theological: Ministers/
Continuing Education

Covid-19 Resources: Resources/Covid-19

Diversity and Justice: Ministries/Diversity
and Justice

Ecumenism: Partners/Ecumenical

ELCA Information: Our Synod/About the
ELCA

ELCA Links: Ministers/Pastors -or-
Ministers/Deacons

ELCA Social Statements: Our Synod/Social
Statements

Events: News/Calendars -or- Home Page

Global Mission: Ministries/Global Mission

Grants: Congregations/Grants

Health & Wellness: Partners/Health &
Wellness

History of the Synod: Our Synod/History

Hunger: Ministries/Hunger Elimination

Interim Guidelines: Congregations/Call
Process

Mission Support: Congregations/
Administration

Newsletter (Wayfarer): News/Newsletters

News: News -or- Home Page

**On the Move (Changes to Contact
Information):** Ministers/Directory

Outreach: Ministries/Community Outreach

Policies (Samples): Resources

Portico Contact and Links: Ministers/
Pastors -or- Ministers/Deacons

TOPIC: MENU TAB /SUB-MENU

Prayer Requests: Ministers/Prayer Requests

Press Kit & Logos: News

Reports to the Bishop, Annual: Links in
Ministers/Pastors -or- Ministers/Deacons

Resource Ministry of the SWPA Synod:
Resources/The Resource Ministry

Roster of Ministers: Ministers/Directory
(contact Sandy DeLorenze for password)

Staff Contact Information and Roles: Our
Synod/Staff

Stewardship: Ministries/Stewardship
Support

Stewardship Resources: Resources

Stories from ELCA and Synod: Our Synod/
Stories -and-Home Page

Supply (Pulpit): Congregations/Pulpit
Supply

Synod Assembly Information: News/Synod
Assembly

Synod Council Actions and Members: Our
Synod/Synod Council

Synod Mission: Our Synod/Mission

Treasurers (Congregations): Congregations/
Administration

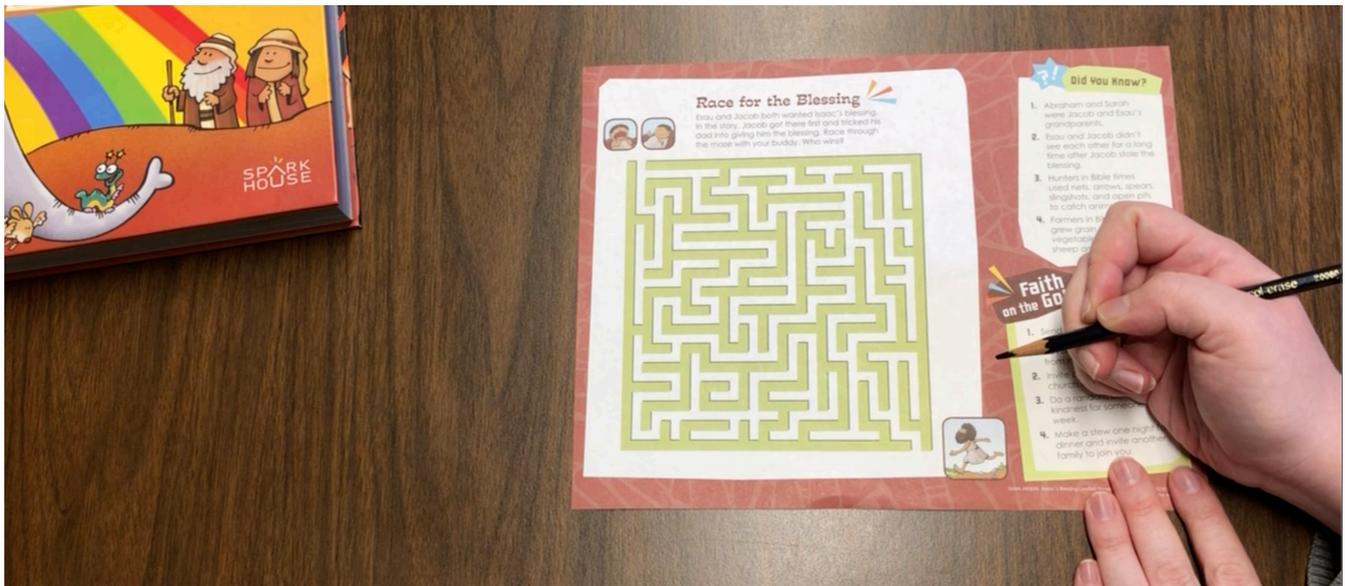
Weekly Email Announcements: News/
Newsletters

Who Do I Call?: Congregations/Who Do I
Call? -or- Resources/Who Do I Call?

Women of the ELCA: Ministries/Women of
the ELCA

As always, do not hesitate to call or contact a member of the staff if you need assistance. We are always here for you and glad to help.

Pastor Asplin: Congregational Call Process, Minister Mobility, & Candidacy
Bob Cairns: Mission Support Contributions, Budget Inquiries, & Office of the Treasurer
Deacon Caywood: Continuing Education, Curriculum, Coaching, & Theological Convocation
Sandy DeLorenze: Reaching the Bishop, Meeting Coordination, & Synod Council
Bishop Kusserow: Constitutional Queries, Situations of Crisis, & Committee Appointments
Carol Ruckert: Pulpit Supply Coordination & Synod Property Questions
Pastor Stoller: Collaborative Models, Mission Endowment Fund, Stewardship, & Outreach
Lauren Wolcott: Synod News, Website, & Media; Consultation on Communications 💧



THANK A TEACHER: MAY 4



Pastor Ellen Lundie

Synod Youth Committee & Associate Pastor at Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran, Glenshaw
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Do you remember the first time you saw one of your teachers outside of the classroom? For me, it was a trip to the grocery store with my mom. As we walked through the refrigerated section and I was going through my spiel on why I needed a Lunchable, suddenly, there was Mrs. Sabol, my first-grade teacher. It stopped me in my tracks. There was my teacher who I saw every day in the classroom with a Frog and Toad reader and at the chalkboard teaching addition. Yet, there she was with a gallon of milk! I was so excited I may as well have been meeting a Disney princess.

Instead, I had the special moment of being able to say hello to my teacher when no one else from my class was there. It was an almost other-worldly and extraordinary experience. That moment was so special to me because Mrs. Sabol had made me feel special in the classroom. I still remember her extraordinary efforts as she helped our class in the first-grade transition of going to school all day while teaching fun lessons on phonics and math.

Teachers have continued their extraordinary efforts this year. Some classrooms moved online with teachers adapting to lessons through the screen, including asking students to unmute and turn on their cameras. Others measured the distance between desks and

put on their masks for in-person learning. Some teachers took on a blend of both styles of teaching as they did their jobs online and in person. **All provided consistency and care as changes seemed to come at every turn. Still, our extraordinary teachers are up to the task.**

In our churches, too, Faith Formation and Christian Education took to online versions. Sunday School teachers could be found on YouTube and Facebook. Activity kits were boxed and sent out. Through it all, the love of God continued to be proclaimed.

Teachers are extraordinary. Today, I say thank you! I invite you to give thanks as well. May 4, 2021, is National Teacher Appreciation Day. 💧



CONNECTING WITH GOD THROUGH CREATION



Todd Garcia-Bish

Director of Environmental Education, Lutherlyn
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Spring has arrived promising renewal for all of God's creation. I pray that this is a time for all of us to refresh and relax after a busy Lenten season and a year-long pandemic. Jesus retreated to the wilderness for restoration; we need to do the same.

We are going to spend a good portion of this liturgical year in the Gospel of Mark. The gospel writer definitely portrays Jesus as seeking out wild places to pray, rest, and find renewal. We hear of Jesus "in the wilderness," "in a lonely place," "on the lakeside," and "on a hillside." It appears that Jesus sometimes seeks out these places to avoid crowds (not always successfully), but I propose that there were much more holistic reasons for retreating to the wilderness.

In our geographic region, the places most wild are forests. For almost 40 years, scientists have been studying the health effects of a practice that the Japanese people call "Shinrin Yoku." This translates as "forest bathing" or "forest showering." It is a practice of actively engaging one's senses in the forest. It is taking the time to look, listen, smell, touch, and, yes, even taste. Many people combine this practice with meditation and/or prayer.

According to the National Institutes of Health, "significant empirical research findings point to a reduction in human heart rate and blood pressure and an increase in relaxation for participants exposed to natural green spaces." There are several different scientific reasons why this is the case. Forests contain higher levels of oxygen, since trees are producing it through photosynthesis. Trees and some other plants also produce phytoncides. These essential oils reduce stress hormone levels in people and increase the presence of anti-cancer proteins. Being exposed to forests is good for you! In fact, it is good for all of us—as a community, too.

Worshipping in the forest reminds us that God was first revealed in Creation. If this year has taught the church anything, it is that we can worship anywhere—at home, in the car, on the phone. Worshipping with our congregations in a forest, park, or camp can require some additional planning, but it is easy to worship outside while physically



distancing from others. It has the added benefits of enabling us to worship with all of creation—to sing praises with the birds and dance with the trees. That is why we worship outdoors every day during the summer at Lutherlyn, as well as spend other intentional time in nature.

The National Institutes of Health report similar reductions in heart rate and blood pressure when people are exposed to nature videos and indoor foliage and flowers. So, if you can't move worship services out into the forest, bring the forest inside through videos and indoor foliage. Think about the sight and smell of an abundance of lilies, tulips, and hyacinths on Easter Sunday. That is the kind of sensory experience that connects us to God through creation.

Places to have your personal “forest shower” abound in our region, with state parks and forests, local parks, and a national forest. Lutherlyn can also be a place for you to relax and restore with 17 miles of trails and a dedicated Prayer Path. (Please contact Lutherlyn ahead of time to use the trails or Prayer Path.) Lutherlyn also welcomes your congregation to worship at one of our outdoor chapels or nearly anywhere else on the 660 acre site.

May the peace of the Lord that we find in the forest be with you all! 💧

LOCAL FOREST TRAILS

“Forest showering” only requires a forested area and time to let your senses take in all of your surroundings. Southwestern PA has a variety of natural areas with forested trails. Many of these places would also be good locations for outdoor worship.

- Chapel Rock Trail, Lutherlyn, Prospect
- Fall's Ravine Trail, Frick Park, City of Pittsburgh
- Fern Cliff Trail, Ohiopyle State Park, Ohiopyle
- Flat Rock Trail, Linn Run State Park, Rector
- Hell's Hollow Trail, McConnells Mill State Park, Portersville
- Mineral Springs Trail, Raccoon Creek State Park, Hookstown
- Prayer and Meditation Trail, Camp Agape, Hickory
- Prayer Path, Lutherlyn, Prospect
- Ravine Trail, Todd Nature Reserve, Sarver
- Slippery Rock Gorge Trail, McConnells Mill State Park, Portersville

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:

May - July

5 Years: Pastor Ellen Lundie

10 Years: Pastor Brandon Johns

Pastor Jack Delk

Pastor James Arter

15 Years: Pastor Christina Hough

20 Years: Pastor Barbara Love

Pastor Frank Podolinski

Pastor Daniel Smail

Pastor Kari Smail

25 Years: Pastor Dorothy Worth

Pastor Lewis Messinger

30 Years: Pastor Joel Benson

35 Years: Pastor Joseph Boomhower

40 Years: Pastor Edward Sheehan

Pastor John Smaligo

Pastor Paul Poerschke

Pastor Richard Neumann

Pastor Thomas McCurdy

45 Years: Pastor John Gropp

Pastor Thomas Moog

50 Years: Pastor Cyril Hurnyak

55 Years: Pastor Gerald Huhn

Pastor David Clement

Pastor Steven Myers

Pastor William Hauser

60 Years: Pastor Cletus Fahrion

70 Years: Pastor Mont Bowser

New Calls:

Pastor James West transferred from the Rocky Mountain Synod with a call as Intentional Interim Pastor of Harrold Zion Lutheran Church, Greensburg, effective February 1, 2020.

Pastor Jocelyn Johnston accepted a call to House of Prayer Lutheran Church, Aliquippa (Around the River Lutheran Parish), effective March 1, 2021.

Pastor Erin Evans accepted a call as Intentional Interim Pastor of Christ Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh (Millvale), effective April 11, 2021.

Marriage/Engagement:

Pastor Katie Maul married Todd McCullough, September 28, 2019

Pastors Jocelyn Johnston and Ryan Pusch announced their engagement, April 7, 2021

Births:

Kashton Paul Krehnovi
Grandson of Carol Ruckert
Born February 19, 2021

Leadership:

Deacon Beth Caywood received her ACC certification from the International Coaching Federation on January 25, 2021

In Memoriam:

Jill Shook, January 27, 2021

Gene Fozard, January 30, 2021

Ruth Goetz
Mother of Pastor David Yoder,
February 4, 2021

Kay Wienk, February 11, 2021

Pastor Bruce Brunkhorst,
February 24, 2021

Pastor Ralph Meyer,
February 24, 2021

Audrey Vitovich, March 15, 2021

Pastor John Cochran,
March 26, 2021

Pastor Bob Newpher,
April 4, 2021

Prayer Requests:

Kathleen Bryte, Pastor Martha Clementson, Nell Hatton, Rachel Faulkner, Deacon Mark Nurnberger,

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

SYNOD STAFF PRESENCE | JAN-MAR 2021

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

Bethesda Lutheran Services

Christ, Millvale

Community 341

Emmanuel, Castle Shannon

English, Zelienople

Faith, Aliquippa

First, Greensburg

Glade Run Lutheran Services

Good Shepherd, McKees Rocks

Good Shepherd, Mt. Pleasant

Harrold Zion, Greensburg

Holy Trinity, Irwin

House of Prayer, Aliquippa

Lutheran SeniorLife

Ministry Partners' Development Directors

Nativity, Allison Park

Paintertown, Irwin

Perry Highway, Wexford

Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries

Pittsburgh Theological Seminary

Region 8 Youth Ministry
Rehoboth, Baden

St. James, Ligonier

St. John, Mars

St. John, North Versailles

St. Luke, West View

St. Luke, Youngwood

St. Mark, Brookline

St. Paul, Washington

Trinity, Avalon

Trinity, Latrobe

Trinity, Wexford

United Lutheran Seminary

Van Kirk, Monaca

Zion's First, Ambridge

May



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June



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Contact Rev. Peter Asplin as liaison to the synod Committee on Ministry at peter.asplin@swpasynod.org.

July



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Issue No. 6 STORIES FROM THE ROAD



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Devotional: CHANGING OF THE SEASONS



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As I sit here in my office at Camp Agapé looking out of my window, birds are singing, and preparations are underway for our summer programming. The long pandemic winter is now behind us. Ecclesiastes 3 comes to mind, which begins, "For everything there is a season....".

If you ever watched the movie *Footloose*, you may remember this chapter being quoted by a young man at a meeting where the students were petitioning to have a school dance. The young man focuses on the verse, "a time to mourn and a time to dance...." We have experienced a long winter of "mourning" with all the pandemic has prohibited us from doing and the lives that have been lost. God gifted our medical professionals with the talents to create a vaccine that will help stem the tide of this recent plague. That winter season is passing and now we embrace spring, where we can begin the "dance" of going outside again to experience the wonder and joy of God's creation.

I am filled with the excitement of the Easter season, and the freedom God has given us of salvation through his grace. Let us go out into God's world to celebrate the wonders of his creation and mercy. Let us shrug off the "dust" of confinement in our homes to put on the "dancing shoes" of re-entering God's world. 💧