

# Wayfarer

STORIES FROM THE ROAD.



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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



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# THE LEGACY OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



## Bishop Abraham D. Allende

Acting Bishop, January & February 2022

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*For you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you.*  
**Jeremiah 1:7b**

In August of 1966, some two months after graduating from California State College in Pennsylvania (now California University of Pennsylvania), I packed my car and headed west to Akron, Ohio, to begin my adult life and career as a Spanish and French teacher in the Akron Public School System. Now, some 55 years and a few career changes later, **I happily return to Southwestern Pennsylvania this coming January to serve as the acting bishop of your synod for two months, while Bishop Kurt Kusserow enjoys a brief sabbatical.**

As we hear in a well-known evening prayer, we cannot see the ending of the ventures to which God calls God's servants. My journey has steered me beyond teaching to positions in the fields of broadcasting with several television and radio stations, mostly in Cleveland; and into a community relations post with the Cleveland Major League Baseball Club. Eventually, the path led me to a vocation in ordained ministry through the Theological Education for Emerging Ministries (TEEM) program and Trinity Lutheran Seminary. Two calls into my ministry I was elected bishop of the Northeastern Ohio Synod and six years later, entered into retirement, or so I thought, in December of 2020.

**My brief sojourn with you, the people of God in Southwestern Pennsylvania, will be highlighted by the commemoration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on Sunday, January 16, 2022.**

In preparation for that synod-wide worship celebration, your Authentic Diversity and Justice Working Group and I have been holding monthly planning sessions electronically. Although Martin Luther King, Jr., is known primarily as the leader of the Civil Rights movement, he always considered himself first and foremost a preacher of the gospel. Yes, Dr. King was a social reformer, an activist, a politician; but above all, his

message of personal and social transformation was rooted in the prophets and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

He knew the power of Christ's teachings to change the world, if we would allow the love of God to enter and dwell within our hearts and in so doing, transform our practices and attitudes toward each other. This was his dream. This was his gospel message.

Dr. King's legacy was a testimony to the power of love, and on many occasions, he said that the insidious power of hatred could only be transformed by love.

King's legacy, as a preacher and pastor, was also foundational to his belief in non-violence. Despite other voices who advocated violence as the answer, King never abandoned the gospel teachings of Jesus in this respect.

None of us needs any special qualifications to be a witness to Christ and the love of God, except our conviction that everyone needs God, and that God has come for everyone in Christ Jesus.

I pray that you will join, either virtually or in person, on January 16, and that this worship celebration and commemoration will inspire you to lift up and live out the legacy and dream of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, not only on that day, but in the days to come. ♦



Photo by Jopopz Tallorin on Unsplash

# THE BETTER ANGELS OF OUR NATURE



## Pastor Daniel Smail

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*Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.*

**Psalm 80:1-7**

It won't be long now. Soon you will see angels everywhere. Angels enwreathed in lights will adorn neighborhood houses. Your favorite card store will sell a whole host of angel ornaments. And angels will also appear in the texts appointed for the season of Advent. In many cases, the angels we hear about in those verses are God's ambassadors and emissaries. Angels are messengers who bring hope to a troubled and weary world.

I can tell you my brother and I were not angels. There were some people who said as much. These people were right, of course. In fact, there were certain seasons of our childhood when we were very un-cherub-like.

As I consider our propensity for mischief, I am also reminded that justice was not meted out equally in the Smail family home. I distinctly remember my parents saying terribly unfair things like, "I really don't care who started it, you will both go to your room and think about what you have done." Seriously, my parents were Lutheran Christians, how could they possibly perpetuate this kind of injustice? My folks said other absurd things like, "You will both deal with the consequences." Silly, is it not? I guess my parents were doing their best, none of us are perfect.

When I was sent to my room to "think about

what I had done," I embraced a distinctive brand of reflection. Oh, I thought about what I had done, but I primarily considered what I had done well. And then, after I had justified myself sufficiently, I contemplated all that my older brother had done wrong. Thereby reinforcing my opinion of him, convicting him, holding him responsible for my present predicament. You must understand, this was serious, these were the days before children had televisions in their rooms. So, to pass the time, my only option was to read through huge chunks of the *Chronicles of Narnia*. The box set was on the shelves above my bed, likely another one of my parents' bright ideas. Reading C.S. Lewis to pass the time, can you imagine?

Anyway, many years have passed since that time. I would like to believe that I have left the past behind. As Paul says in 1 Corinthians,

“when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways.” But this can be so difficult to do. Difficult because the temptations that were present in our youth linger through adulthood. **And the temptation I am most concerned about in the context of this article is the very real temptation to use the words of judgment we hear in the season of Advent to justify ourselves and convict other children of God. Thereby furthering the division and self-righteousness Christ came to address.**

When we approach the sacred text, we often do so while seeking comfort, assurance, and affirmation. So, when we hear words like, “you brood of vipers,” it might not make much sense to lump ourselves in with that lot. Hear the words of Jeremiah from the first week in Advent: “The days are surely coming, says the Lord.” We may be tempted to paraphrase that bit of prophecy in this way: “I sure am glad **they** are going to get what **they** have coming to **them!**” As the Gospel of Luke states, “People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world.” How simple it is to assume “the world” that is mentioned does not include me and those who agree with me. But it does. And trust me, you will want to be included, because that is the world that God is redeeming.

There is more to the story. John the Baptist may have had some reservations about this “brood of vipers,” but the fullness of his message includes a promise, “but one who is more powerful than I is coming...” Jeremiah also points to a brighter future: “In those days I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.” And finally, Jesus taught in the 21st chapter of Luke, that when God’s people saw the foreboding signs they should “stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

As we faithfully attend to the fullness of the scriptural witness, we clearly see that we are bound by the consequences of our actions, but by the grace of God, the confinement is temporary. As we journey through Advent, the message will be consistent. And then,

the “good news of great joy” will be shared once more. Deliverance is coming, just as it has come. I have been blessed to glimpse a form of this firsthand. Because, you see, eventually my mother would gently open my bedroom door and inform me that I was now free to go. It was a relief, but there were conditions that came along with the freedom, “Now, go apologize to your brother.” There was a lesson being delivered. Just as we shared in the consequences, so too we would share in the reconciliation. Maybe my folks weren’t such bad Lutherans after all.

And maybe our distinctive brand of protestant theology can offer hope and a way forward in a contentious time. In another season when the people of our country were deeply divided, a profoundly prophetic voice articulated a noble hope: “We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection.” Interestingly, Abraham Lincoln believed “the better angels of our nature” would help us live into this vision.

“The better angels of our nature.” Hmm... It won’t be long now. Soon you will see angels everywhere. These messengers will add beauty to this season and may even remind us of God’s plan for the whole of creation: redemption **and** reconciliation. 💧



The image features a dark wood-grain background. At the top, the word "Wayfarer" is written in a white, cursive script. Below it, the website address "swpasynod.org/wayfarer" is displayed in a white, sans-serif font. In the bottom left corner, there are two overlapping images of "Wayfarer" magazine covers. The top cover shows a green landscape with the title "Wayfarer" and the subtitle "A MESSAGE FROM THE PEOPLE". The bottom cover shows a group of people, with the title "Wayfarer" and the subtitle "A MESSAGE FROM THE PEOPLE". To the right of the magazine images, the text "New Council Members?" is written in a white, sans-serif font. Below that, the text "Sign up to receive a free copy of Wayfarer." is written in a white, sans-serif font.



Photo by Ben White on Unsplash

## HOW SHALL THEY HEAR? MINISTRY OF THE WORD BY LAY WORSHIP LEADERS



### **Pastor Peter D. Asplin**

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In our Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, according to the report of the secretary in the 2020 Bulletin of Reports, 26 congregations are without a pastor called or contracted to lead worship on Sunday mornings. Since that list was created, some congregations have joined the list and some have left. What is a reality is that congregations facing such circumstances are cared for in a very different way than congregations with regular pastoral leadership.

Our synod strives to provide trained worship leaders for congregations in these challenging circumstances. Pastor Natalie Hall, a Lutheran, leads the Love Teach Heal Academy, sponsored by our synod and the Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh and supported by both bishops, providing great training for our Lay Worship Leaders.

In addition to trained lay worship leaders, faithful pastors, either retired or serving other ministries, also provide worship leadership to congregations without pastors, including presiding at the Sacrament of Holy Communion. Ms. Carol Ruckert, a long-time member of synod staff, works to coordinate lay worship leaders for congregations and share worship leader contact information with pastors who are going on leave or vacation. Together these faithful lay leaders and pastors try to accomplish one goal: to preach Christ and him crucified to people of God who hunger for the word.

Ray Dittenhafer is a member of the Hatfield Ferry Lutheran Parish. Ray has been providing worship leadership throughout the Mon Valley, Fayette and Washington Counties for a few years now. While not a pastor, and not authorized to preside at the table nor distribute holy communion in the congregations where he serves, Ray nonetheless brings the Good News several times a month to the people of God, sharing the faith he has been given by God with others. When asked to talk about his call to serve God in this way, Ray said he likes “being able to lead worship for congregations that were not able to have service because of the shortage of ordained pastors.” Ray says he “likes bringing the message to people who want to hear it, attend and value worship.”

As a synod we give thanks for Ray and for all the faithful lay leaders who provide regular preaching and worship leadership across the synod. 💧

# CALLED TOGETHER



## Pastor Erin Evans

*Intentional Interim Pastor of  
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Clergy parents feel like they are always giving someone the short end of the stick: your kids, your call, or your spouse. Multiply by two for clergy couple families.

Brian and I have found a great resource that checks all the boxes for us: a fun retreat, continuing education, and quality family time. *Called Together* is a retreat at Massanetta Springs in the mountains of Virginia, which gathers the families of Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and other clergy couples who have been seeking this same support for their relationship and family.

Lodging, meals, and worship take place together as a family, but there is time built into the schedule for professional development, and even a "date night" for spouses to have a special meal and time alone with each other. They have workshops and bible study and continuing education opportunities for grown-ups, while providing excellent child care and camp stuff for your kids. They have even provided an opportunity to have a free professional family pictures taken!

I recently accepted a new call, and left behind a community of people who were my daughter's church family. The Pixar movie *Lilo and Stitch* teaches our children "Ohana means family, and family means no one gets left behind." In following God's call to a new



ministry setting, I am living into my ordination vows and promises, but have disrupted my kid's life and challenged her concept of "church family." This has required many age-appropriate conversations about our jobs, our call, and the church.

I am eternally grateful for the members of the ministerium and colleagues who serve as "church family" for my daughter. Grateful for these colleagues who may someday serve as her pastor when she needs a grown-up to talk to who is not a parent. Grateful for the clergy friends who navigate family stuff together and support one another, and so when we transition from one call to another, we still remain in a community of people who care for us.

If these feelings and needs resonate with you, next year's retreat for clergy families is August 1 through 4, and you can find more information at [massanettasprings.org/programs/calledtogether](https://massanettasprings.org/programs/calledtogether) or speak with Brian or myself. And if your family needs support or a playdate with a chatty four-year-old, let us know! 💧



## COLLABORATION ACROSS THE CHURCH



### Pastor Keith Fry

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**H**ow many Lutherans does it take to...? We've all heard the jokes. But there's actually an important truth underlying the humor: we are not in this alone! We are called together in community for the vital work of the Good News, and together we can make things happen.

Collaboration occurs often within a congregation, but it can also occur across the three expressions of the ELCA—congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization—to meet the needs of ministry.

One example of this took place recently. Bishop Kusserow contacted me in the Office of the Secretary at the churchwide organization. (The Office of the Secretary has responsibility for maintaining the rosters of ministers in this church.) He had been contacted by Bishop Barbara Collins of the Upper Susquehanna Synod, who had a candidate for ordination who had discerned a call to serve as assistant director and camp pastor at Camp Lutherlyn.

Because we in the ELCA place a very high value on the education and formation of new pastors, there is a requirement in our constitution and bylaws that all new Ministers of Word and Sacrament serve for three years in a congregation before receiving other kinds of calls (e.g., chaplaincy, synod staff, camp ministry, etc.). However, there is

room for exception to that requirement to be approved when it serves the Good News and the mission and ministry of this church.

**Both bishops wanted to see what could be done to meet this ministry need while still ensuring that the candidate would receive the best formation possible as a pastor.**

Within a very short time, the bishops had written a formal request and affirmation to the Roster Committee of the Conference of Bishops, which considers such matters—so other bishops from across this church also stepped in to help. The candidate drafted a statement explaining how this ministry would serve the needs of this church and describing his gifts for this call. His Candidacy Committee in the Upper Susquehanna Synod, which had shepherded him through the process of being approved for ordination, provided a strong endorsement of his gifts and preparation.

One of the congregations in your synod then very generously stepped forward to agree to serve as a training site for the new pastor for



those crucial initial years so his ministry could be rooted in a congregation where he will continue to develop his gifts for preaching, administering the sacraments, and providing pastoral care. Your synod's First Call Theological Education program will also accompany this pastor for three years, helping to round out the first-class education the candidate had already received through an ELCA seminary. With all these voices and willing workers saying "yes!" the Roster Committee then met on an extraordinary basis to recommend an exception so the candidate could be ordained and begin to serve in the mission the Spirit was calling him to.

Now, some might say, "That's bureaucracy!" But I think it actually is a very rich and agile response on the part of quite a number of people and of all three expressions of this church to respond to a need that was present. In this way, the camp's ministry is enhanced by having a highly-trained Minister of Word and Sacrament; the new pastor's formation is enriched both for his own development and for the good of this church and the people he will serve in the future; a local congregation's ministry can be supported by having an extra set of hands at the same time that the congregation is helping to form a stronger pastor for the good of all Christ's church; and we as a denomination can continue to maintain the highest of standards for ministry, because we know that developing well-trained leaders will serve God's work into the future.

So, how many Lutherans did this take? I don't have an exact count! But I do know that when God's people work together, the Spirit can use us for building up the church and doing new things! Thanks be to God! 💧



# LUTHERAN IMMIGRATION & REFUGEE SERVICE



**Pastor Ross Carmichael**

*Pastor of St. Andrew Lutheran Church,  
Shadyside*

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412-682-3342

**M**y story is an immigrant story. My great-grandparents came to the U.S. from Poland and settled in Chicago. The family name was “Americanized” to help them more smoothly make their way in this country, and I have always been somewhat sad that my family felt the need to do this, and for the pieces of our identity and culture that we lost.

When I entered ministry, I had the privilege of working with an Indonesian Lutheran community in Seattle, and witnessed these siblings in Christ facing serious difficulties because of where they came from. In Chicago, I heard stories of my Mexican American parishioners and their efforts to cross the border to a place of greater safety and opportunity for themselves and their families. I learned about the dynamics that lead to migration, and the many roadblocks that for years have made it difficult, if not impossible, for people to come to the U.S. with proper documentation, or even for families of mixed immigration status to remain together.

All this stirred in me a passion to support immigrants and refugees, according to the law of the Hebrew scriptures and the wide welcome Jesus modeled in his parables and ministry. When I came to Pittsburgh, I was pleased to learn that the SWPA Synod has an active Immigration Working Group of the Church in Society committee, and I quickly connected with them.



**One of our key resources and partner organizations in this work is Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS).** For over 80 years, LIRS has resettled refugees, reunited families, and kindled the American dream, serving more than 500,000 people who have sought safety and hope in U.S. communities. Currently, LIRS is working with partners and volunteers to make sure that our new Afghan neighbors are welcomed and cared for with safe housing, new clothing, and good food!

There are a variety of ways to get involved in the great work of LIRS to support our new neighbors. You and your congregation can learn more through the LIRS' *EMMAUS: Congregational Discernment Guide*, which through three sessions encourages prayer, discussion, and discernment on how we are called to join in the work of welcome. LIRS also invites congregations to join in its *Hope for the Holidays* project, which collects cards and donations to purchase gifts for distribution to children affected by detention and separated from their families, reminding them that they are not forgotten during the holiday season. All these great resources and more can be found at:

[lirs.org/congregational-resources/](https://lirs.org/congregational-resources/)

If you would like to learn more about LIRS and/or the efforts of the synod's Immigration Working Group, please feel free to contact me or Pastor Linda Theophilus ([revtheophilus@live.com](mailto:revtheophilus@live.com)). 💧



## INTEREST-FREE LOANS TO CHURCHES



### Pastor Robert Gago

*President of the Board of Managers, Lutheran Church Extension Society*  
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**F**aith Lutheran Church in Natrona Heights faced a critical safety issue—a leaning chimney on their building. They feared a strong storm or wind would send this chimney crashing down. If the chimney fell it would not only do irreparable harm to their building, but also be a danger to persons nearby. The insurance company denied their claim to help. The council sought bids to remove the dangerous chimney—bids were in excess of \$22,000. Facing the dilemma of such a large and unforeseen expenditure, the congregation turned to the Lutheran Church Extension Society for help. The Society granted Faith an interest free loan of \$25,000 for five years to remove the hazardous chimney. Thanks to the Society, the chimney will come down, the threat of imminent danger is gone, and all can breathe a little easier knowing that disaster has been averted.

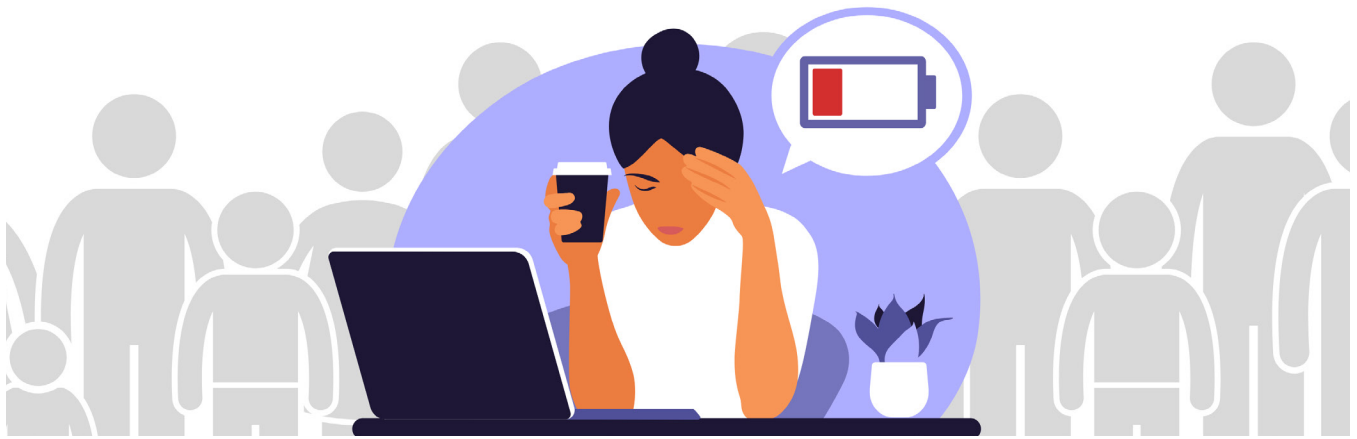
**The Lutheran Church Extension Society was incorporated in Pittsburgh in 1893 with an original gift of \$10,000 with the purpose of lending money, interest free, to area Lutheran congregations for the construction of buildings to house them.** Today, the Society has assets of over \$300,000 available to provide interest-free loans to support congregations. Presently, congregations can borrow up to \$25,000 for up to five years interest free for new construction, energy conservation, fire and safety projects, and making buildings handicap accessible.

Through a Board of Managers of five clergy and ten laity, the Society grants no-interest loans to member congregations. Member

congregations pay an annual membership of \$50 to join us in our mission of supporting congregations with interest -free loans. In addition to granting loans to congregations, the Society annually supports the synod's intern program.

I am privileged to serve as president of the Board of Managers of the Lutheran Church Extension Society. I am happy to continue serving in this mission and ministry of helping congregations to build and maintain their houses of worship.

Learn more at [swpasynod.org/grants](http://swpasynod.org/grants) 💧



## COMPASSION BEYOND FATIGUE



**Rev. Dr. Kimberly Greway, OSL**

*Pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church, North Versailles*  
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**F**or eleven years, I walked into the Allegheny County Jail each morning, clear bag in hand holding only the most basic necessities, shoes from a small selection in my closet that did not set off the metal detector, lunch containing no glass, aluminum, or other contraband items. I would wind my way through security checks, locked doors, elevators, and hallways greeting staff and inmates as I walked along.

Often a voice would call out from behind me, "Hey, Chaplain Kimberly!" and I would turn to see an inmate who knew me from a previous incarceration. We'd catch up about how they were doing, what their plans were, and what led them back to jail. "This time," they'd tell me, "I'm never coming back." I'd always wholeheartedly agree and pray they were right.

Once I reached the chaplain's office, a large pile of papers indicated the number of inmates who wanted to see a chaplain. Scanning the names, I'd always see ones that I recognized. On one hand, this made the work of caring easier: we already had relationship, and I already knew what kind of support they might want. On the other hand, I always hated to see people back inside who had been released.

Sometimes they'd had a relapse in their alcohol or drug addiction, sometimes they'd had a minor probation violation like breaking curfew, sometimes they had new charges

that they were facing. And so, we'd begin again.

Over the years, the weight of seeing the same inmates incarcerated again and again begins to weigh on you. The stories that they tell, the abuse they've suffered, and the desperation or resignation in their eyes weighs even more heavily.

Over time, this kind of heaviness can lead to compassion fatigue. Compassion fatigue is the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion associated with caring for others. As with physical activities, we need rest from care-giving activities in order to be rejuvenated.

**As clergy, we are highly susceptible to experiencing compassion fatigue. We care and support, listen and witness, guide and walk alongside—often to our own detriment.**

We ignore early signs of burnout like irritability, detachment, or loss of motivation. We continue to care for others but neglect to

care for ourselves. Self-doubt creeps in, and our common response is to do more and be more for more people.

While I was in seminary, professor and theologian Stanley Hauerwas dispensed a warning that I will never forget: clergy should avoid at all costs being a “quivering mass of availability.” Trying to be all things to all people at all times can very quickly lead to compassion fatigue.

The danger of compassion fatigue is that it leads to a lack of empathy, a lack of energy, and increased sensitivity, impulsivity, and depression. None of these things make us better caregivers.

We can better serve ourselves and our parishioners if we follow the example of Jesus who occasionally withdrew from the crowds. He was not always successful in his retreats, as we will not be, but he continued to carve out time for rest, friendship, and prayer.

Our councils and mutual ministry committees can be great resources for us in preventing compassion fatigue. Cluster meetings or ministeriums provide support from colleagues experiencing the same challenges.

We can also learn a lesson from the ways we provide pastoral care to others. Our own methods can teach us how to better care for ourselves and prevent compassion fatigue: protect, inform, pray. We can set boundaries that will protect us from harm, inform the church of those boundaries with help from church leaders, and take time to pray and have Sabbath rest (see sidebar).

These are not easy tasks. Reading this article will not prevent you from ever experiencing compassion fatigue. But I pray you tuck away some of the suggestions so that you can draw upon them when most needed. 💧

## PROACTIVE ADVICE

### Help for the Clergy person

- Collect data on yourself
  - Track how you spend your time for two weeks in general categories (worship prep, pastoral care, family time, etc.)
  - Evaluate if that is the right balance for you
- Establish firm boundaries for your time
  - Determine your weekly and vacation days off and take them
  - Include your days off in your email signature and indicate that you will not respond to email or phone calls on those days except for emergencies (leave instructions for emergencies)
  - Set a limit of how many evening meetings or events you will attend per week
- Discuss your boundaries and priorities with the Council and Mutual Ministry Committee
  - Let them run interference for you when necessary
  - Work with them to prioritize tasks – e.g., establish together a pastoral care priority list that includes potential new members, emergencies, inactive members, the hospitalized, active members
- Refer those in your care to experts
  - Referrals can greatly benefit your parishioners, widen their circle of support, and also prevent you from ministering outside of your expertise

### Help for the Ministry Site/Parish

- Respect your clergy person's time off by not expecting responses during that time
- Ask your clergy person about their self-care strategies
- Encourage vacation time and facilitate it by securing pastoral care and liturgy coverage
- Hold some meetings by Zoom to enable your clergy person to be away from the building, negate commute time, and avoid getting caught up in items on their desk or lengthy conversations in the parking lot
- Do not let them attend meetings every night
- Take extensive minutes at meetings the pastor does not attend so they are well-informed
- Help others in the church/institution to understand the pastor's need for rest and Sabbath

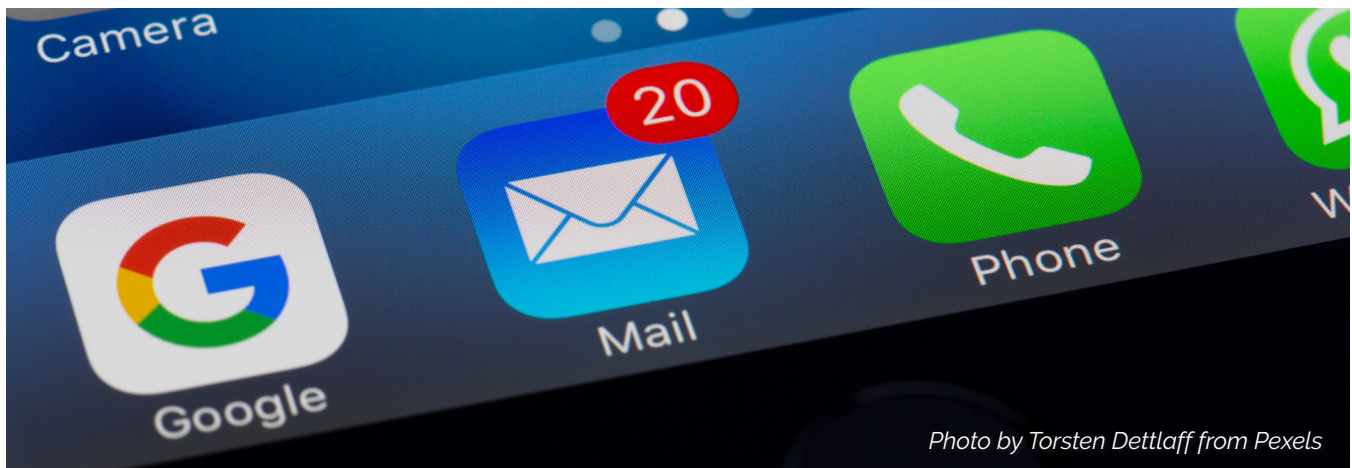


Photo by Torsten Dettlaff from Pexels

# EMAIL SCAMS & SECURITY



## Bruce Letterle

Member of Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Glenshaw and Managing Director of Red Lab Media  
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Everyone with an email address has to deal with spam emails. Your email service has spam filters in place that catch most of the reported and obvious attempts, but there are still some that end up in your inbox. November 30 is Computer Security Day and a good time to refresh your security knowledge. The following procedures will help you find which messages are not real and could be dangerous.

### Steps to Identify Spam

1. Check for typos or strange wording. Poor language or choppy phrases can be indicative of a spam email.
2. Check for bad links. If you hover over the text of a link you will see the underlying true link.
3. Be suspicious of any emails asking for personal information. No legitimate company asks for that in an email.
4. Check for whether the contents fit the circumstances. Did your boss or coworkers say that they would be sharing an attachment or link with you? Did the email ask you to do something that would not be consistent with who the sender says they are? If you're suspicious, get in touch with them. Do not reply to the email, though. Use another method to contact them.
5. Check to make sure the "From" and "Reply To" address match. If they don't, it may be a sign of a spoofed email.
6. Does it seem believable? Winning a big prize or money does not usually happen out of the blue.
7. If there are strange file attachments in the email, do not open them. They could contain viruses or ransomware.
8. If you are suspicious of the message, you can try searching the contents on Google. This could be a popular scam that has been reported many times in the past.

### Fight Back at Spammers

Email spam filters are being updated all the time, but hackers are always coming up with new ways to get around them. So just because it made it to your inbox doesn't mean it's safe. You need to carefully follow the eight steps in this article to make sure you are not a victim of one of these scams. 💧

# 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:

### November – January

5 Years: Pastor Erin Jones  
10 Years: Pastor Melba Dibble  
Deacon Amy Santoriello  
15 Years: Pastor Kimberly M. Van Driel  
20 Years: Pastor David Rike  
25 Years: Pastor Matthew Stabe  
35 Years: Deacon Andrea Dubler

## Ordination:

**Pastor Christopher Combs** on September 12 at Hope Lutheran Church, Cranberry Township

(Pictured with Internship Supervisor, Pastor Peggy Suhr-Barkley)



## New Calls:

**Deacon Michelle Kunkle**, Deacon of St. Luke's, Youngwood, July 25, 2021

**Pastor Christopher Combs**, Pastor of First, Greensburg, September 15, 2021

## Marriage:

**Pastors Jocelyn Johnston and Ryan Pusch** were married on September 11, 2021.

**Pastors Martha McCreight and David Hanssen** have announced their engagement.

## Retirement:

**Pastor Steven Broome**  
**Pastor Deborah Byrum**

## In Memoriam:

**Anita Sheehan**, mother of Pastor Ed Sheehan, July 6, 2021

**Lenarda Myers**, mother-in-law of Pastor Ryan Kobert, July 6, 2021

**Clayton Hartman**, synod volunteer, July 8, 2021

**Brenda Stuckey**, wife of Pastor Gene Stuckey, July 12, 2021

**Pastor Don Thomas**, July 12, 2021

**Bill Horne II**, Vice President of the ELCA, August 14, 2021

**Charles Clinton**, father-in-law of Pastor Allyn Itterly, August 26, 2021

**JoAnn Dawes**, wife of Pastor Tim Dawes, September 7, 2021

**John F. Johnston, Jr.**, father of Pastor Jocelyn Johnston, September 19, 2021

**Gary Green**, brother of Pastor Don Green, October 3, 2021

## Prayer Requests:

Susan Camberg, Kathy Green, Pastor Bill Henry, Joyce Johnston, Wilma Cairns, Pastor Don Worth, Pastor Frank Zeman, Judy Zeman

The most up-to-date list at: [swpasynod.org/prayer](http://swpasynod.org/prayer)



Selah

Rostered Ministers Retreat

Lutherlyn | Oct 11-14, 2021

## SYNOD STAFF PRESENCE | AUG-OCT 2021

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

Berkeley Hills, North Hills  
Bethesda, Lower Burrell  
Bethlehem, Scenery Hill  
Christ, Duquesne  
Christ, Millvale  
Emanuel Heilman,  
Ford City  
English, Zelienople  
Faith, Natrona Heights  
First, New Kensington  
Forks Zion, Leechburg  
Glade Run  
Lutheran Services  
Good Shepherd,  
New Castle

Grace, Manorville  
Holy Trinity, Irwin  
Hope, Cranberry  
LAMPa Policy Council  
Lutheran SeniorLife  
Lutherlyn  
Nativity, Allison Park  
Peace, Greenock  
Perry Highway, Wexford  
PLUM  
Prince of Peace,  
Pleasant Hills  
Lutheran Campus Ministry,  
Oakland  
St. Andrew, Pittsburgh

St. John Mark, Homestead  
St. John of Highland  
St. John, Mars  
St. John, North Versailles  
St. John, Perrysville  
St. Luke, Youngwood  
St. Mark, Brookline  
St. Mark, Springdale  
St. Matthew, Crafton  
St. Paul, Zelienople  
St. Peter, Uniontown  
Trinity, Freeport  
Trinity, Latrobe  
Trinity, Wexford  
Zion, Harmony



# Calendar of Causes

SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIAL MINISTRY PARTNERS

*November*



## *Promising Futures*

Promising futures for children, youth, and families through individualized mental and behavioral health services provided in a residential, school or community setting.

**BETHESDA1919.ORG**

*December*



**GLADE RUN**  
LUTHERAN SERVICES

*Serving Our Communities Since 1854*

With a focus on education, mental health, autism, and unique therapeutic offerings, Glade Run has a long tradition of linking faith and service.

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CHURCH IN AMERICA

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Issue No. 8 STORIES FROM THE ROAD



MORE STORIES & CONNECTIONS:  
[facebook.com/swpasynod](https://facebook.com/swpasynod)

## *Devotional*: **WAITING FOR GOD**



### **Pastor Roger Steiner**

*Pastor of Penn-Zion's & Brush Creek Lutheran Cooperative Ministry*  
[revrsteiner@verizon.net](mailto:revrsteiner@verizon.net) | 724-744-3151

On one hand, the New Testament verb "to thirst" also shares the meaning "to long for." It has been my experience as a pastor for 32 years that this type of waiting dominates most people's lives. We "long for" justice and righteousness. We "long for" God to satisfy our "thirst" by echoing the words of Isaiah 64: "O that you would tear open the heavens and come down"...to resolve our pandemic, our political turmoil, our suffering, our need to feed and water all these people, etc.

On the other hand, there is the "waiting for" God to fulfill God's promise of salvation. A different verb in the New Testament, it centers on a hope that is already being fulfilled in Christ. It understands that a certain justice has already been accomplished by God in the forgiveness of sin.

Advent pulls together these two types of waiting by balancing our thirsting for justice with the joy of loving service while we wait. The former asks (expects?) God to right a wrong in our present reality. The latter acknowledges that all wrong has been righted for all time and that we are called into a blessed future rooted in the commandment to love.

Perhaps this Advent we might consider the possibility that God is still waiting for us to assuage the thirsting of this world for justice by simply caring for our neighbors, beginning with water and food. "If I have not love, I am nothing..." 💧