

Issue No. 10 | May 2022

Wayfarer

STORIES FROM THE ROAD.

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

Published by Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod

MISSION:

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

*“Sing to him, sing praise to
him; tell of all his wonderful
acts.”*
—Psalm 105:2

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GOD MEETS US EVERYWHERE



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AN INTERVIEW WITH HOLLY SCHMITT, SWPA SYNOD ASSEMBLY PLANNING COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR

Not many know about all the work that goes into a synod assembly, but you do! You have been a part of synod assembly planning for some time.

It's been close to 15 years. I was a sacristan and helped with other things before I was on the committee. I went to my first synod assembly when I was 17 or 18 years old. It's my favorite thing. I would go twice! I love synod assembly.

What do you love about it?

I think, and it's something we haven't had since covid, it's the fellowship. Because I really feel that it shows God's work in different places than just a pew on Sunday. A lot of the people I've met, my church friends are not just from my congregation but are people from synod assembly. When I first went with my pastor at the time, Pastor Heather Lubold, I was introduced to the people she knew, and I have now met so many people I consider friends and mentors—all from synod assembly.

I know in the past I've seen you with a headset, coordinating things—mysterious things; what have you worked on?

I've done set up, like the day before. But I was mostly tech. I've worked with everybody from Pastor Kevin Clementson and Pastor Sandy Kessinger, assisted them with typing up slides and then I was the person who put up

announcements, when there wasn't as much digital stuff as now. And I was doing the main presentations—coordinating with Dennis [Lane] in the booth, running technology, making sure that things ran smoothly.

And they did! Now you are co-chair of the planning committee, working with Pastor Bob Schaefer.

Yeah, he has been great, almost like the silent partner who signs the checks—but always supporting me, letting me do my own thing. I'm the first non-male, non-clergy person to lead this in our synod, and when the bishop approached me about leading it, he told me to dream big. So I had all these plans that involved young and older kids to be involved in various ways, however when I reached out to facilities, they weren't ready to plan to have in person events, so we are online again this year, and so we have new and different ways to reach people.

Are you still dreaming big about a future in-person assembly?

I am! I have lots of ideas and want to try new things and places. And I want to get different people involved, in particular the younger generation, so they can learn about it as not just something talked about at a congregational meeting to elect delegates.

What are you hoping people will take away from this year's assembly?

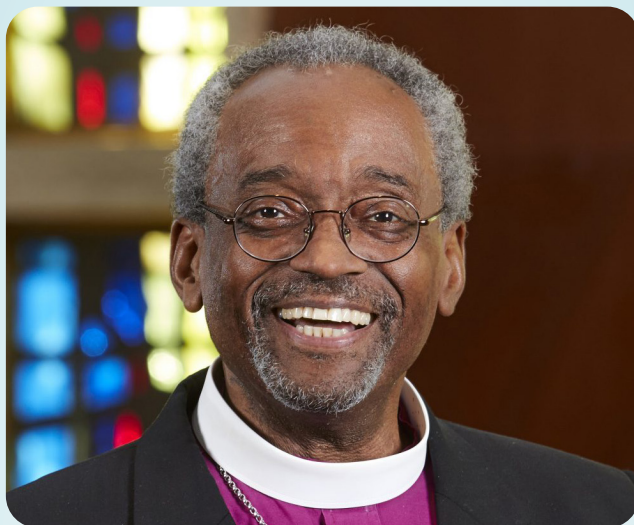
My hope is that people come away from this realizing that even when we are not in-person, God meets us where we are. Whether we are on a mountain top or canoeing or sitting in a pavilion at three separate locations yet still worshipping together. That we can be together in spirit, and we can feel God's presence not just from a church pew. And that's my goal everyday. God meets you where you are. And you don't have to be in a certain place to find that, you have to open your heart and mind up to that.

I think people are really excited about assembly worship being held simultaneously in three places on Friday evening. What excites you about it?

Yes! I like that worship is not in formal places, since they are outside and open to everyone. I'm hoping people will come to worship or they'll hear who our speaker is Thursday night, tune in and want to come next year. I want them to take this back to their congregations and get them excited. We haven't had a whole lot to look forward to in the past two years, so I'm hoping that people are looking forward to this.

Anything else you want people to know about planning and why it is so important?

We are always open to ideas. One of my big goals is to engage younger and new people. I want people to feel like they can be themselves in church and feel welcome, and I want younger people to serve and speak up, and to not have to do things in the ways we've always done it. And I hope that this is reflected in some of these synod assemblies. 💧



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

**EPISCOPAL BISHOP
MICHAEL CURRY**

The Most Rev. Michael Curry is the 27th and current presiding bishop and primate of The Episcopal Church (TEC), one of the ELCA's full communion partners. He was elected in 2015 and serves as TEC's chief pastor and spokesperson, as well as president and CEO.

Throughout his ministry, Bishop Curry has been a prophetic leader, particularly in the areas of racial reconciliation, climate change, evangelism, immigration policy, and marriage equality.

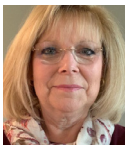
Widely regarded as one of the most dynamic preachers of our time, Bishop Curry is the author of five books and a regular guest on national and international media outlets. In May 2018, he preached at the wedding of England's Prince Harry to Meghan Markle. In November 2021, he officiated at the funeral of former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC.

**THURSDAY, JUNE 16 AT 6 PM
LIVESTREAMING:
FACEBOOK.COM/SWPASYNOD**



The Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Monroeville

VITAL CONGREGATIONS RE-BOOT CAMP



Leigh Pogue

Member of The Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Monroeville

This story may sound familiar to others who live, work and serve in a local congregation. Our church has stood tall for over 60 years in a suburban community in the Pittsburgh area. Our church building is large and beautiful but aging and costly in upkeep. Weekly worship attendance has shown a steady decline for the last 10 years. The dedicated members of the congregation council spend more time talking about financial concerns and deficit than about starting new ministries. The pandemic simply exacerbated our worries.

So, when we were given the opportunity to participate in an ELCA-sponsored webinar series called Vital Congregations Re-BOOT Camp, a few of us jumped on board to learn what we could about revitalization in our congregation. The best way to describe my feelings when I attended these webinars was exhilarated and inspired! During the four-session series, we heard from church leaders and lay people who had or are experiencing a period of redevelopment, transformation, and renewal in their congregations. We were introduced to leaders and resources that will aid our congregation in its efforts to find the path God has for us in our community and to work together with the Holy Spirit to see where we are being led.

One key takeaway was the reminder to focus not on our limitations but on God's abundance. We reflected on the ways that our congregation is currently living out its mission in our community and we were heartened to acknowledge that, despite the

challenges we face, we have many wonderful ministries that are active and are meaningful examples of the dedication and commitment of our members in serving God and our community. A second takeaway was to shift from the thinking that "we need people" to acknowledging that "people need us." While member growth in our congregation would be a welcomed blessing, considering how we can best serve the needs in our community is really what our mission is about.

We may be smaller but we are still very vital and we are hopeful that through the revitalization campaign that we are launching we will find our way to telling the story of Jesus in our community and beyond for many, many years to come. 💧

**JOIN VITAL CONGREGATIONS TRAINING
IN OCTOBER & NOVEMBER 2022:
[SWPASYNOD.ORG/STORIES/VITAL2022](https://swpasynod.org/stories/vital2022)**



SING TO THE LORD A NEW SONG



Laura Reynolds

Director of Music at Christ Lutheran Church, Duquesne
and East Liberty Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh

A new hymnal supplement can be both exciting and daunting for pastors, deacons, and church musicians. As church musicians, we are often nervous teaching new music, and the congregation worries when they move away from their favorite old hymns. In 2021, Augsburg Fortress published *All Creation Sings*, a new supplement to *Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW)*. This new hymnal includes two new liturgies, along with prayers, thanksgivings for both table and font, laments, and approximately 200 new hymns and songs. I have been introducing new songs each week for the past few months, and the feedback has been mostly positive from the congregations. Some people still grumble over learning new music, but most of the parishioners are open to learning different hymns. As a church musician, I really appreciate that *All Creation Sings (ACS)* has new hymnody that can be learned quickly and easily.

Many developments have occurred in the ELCA since *ELW* was published in 2006. As a church, we have made social statements on human sexuality (2009), criminal justice (2013), and faith, sexism, and justice (2019). The lyrics in our worship music should reflect the teachings of the church. *All Creation Sings* takes many of our old favorite hymns and uses new and inclusive language.

All Creation Sings is organized in a similar format as *ELW* and *With One Voice*. Beginning with two new liturgies, including new musical settings, the supplement quickly establishes the intentional inclusion of non-English languages, using both Spanish and English in Setting 11. Setting 12 has options for morning and evening worship, the latter being quieter and more introspective.

The prayers, thanksgivings, and laments in *All Creation Sings* reflect the needs of our current world. These are intended for both assembly worship and private devotional time. Some of the prayers include petitions intended for worship: for the church's ministries, for the healing and well being of creation, peace among nations, civic distress, times of conflict and disaster, and healing of breaches of trust. There are also many petitions for a small group setting or private devotion. Some of these are: living with mental illness, addiction and recovery, pregnancy loss, end of a marriage, following a difficult decision, death of a pet, and times of financial stress.

After the prayers, the music section in the hymnal gives us approximately 200 songs

and hymns. Most of the music and lyrics were written from the 1900s through today. This gives both the melodies and the lyrics a sense of modernity, but also maintains some of the tunes we connect to when we worship. One of those familiar tunes, *Hyfrydol* (*Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*), is presented with new lyrics as “Love Has Brought Us Here Together,” ACS 1040, a hymn appropriate for use at a wedding. The first line is:

“Love has brought us here together; love of family, love of friends;
love, our vow till death should part us; love,
God’s gift, that never ends.
From our birth, throughout our lifetime,
love’s insistence calls our name.
Floods of waters cannot drown it or put out
its dancing flame.”

Another is “Before the Waters Nourished Earth,” ACS 1049, to the tune of *St. Colombia* (*The King of Love My Shepherd Is*), which begins:

“Before the waters nourished earth or night
imagined morning,
a Love conceived the universe and reveled
in its forming.”

Another notable aspect of *All Creation Sings* is that many of the songs are short and repetitive, facilitating rapid congregational learning. In selecting music that uplifts the readings and Gospel, some church musicians tend to choose music their congregation knows well. Some of the new songs in *All Creation Sings* are so short that with just a few repetitions, the congregation can learn both melody and words quickly. While they do not come from the Taizé community, these songs can be used in the same way to evoke the Spirit through repetitive singing. “Come and See,” ACS 976, is a wonderful example of this:

“What are you looking for? Come, see,
come and see.
What are you looking for? Come, see, come
and see.”

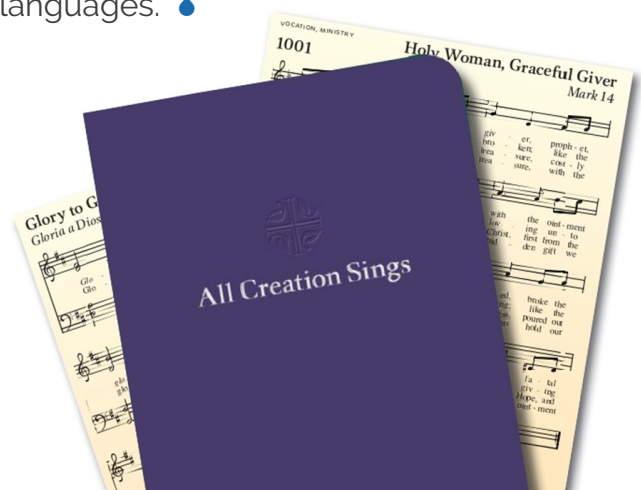
Another is, “Christ, Our Peace,” ACS 1037:

“Christ, our peace, you break down the
walls that divide us;
Christ, our peace, come, make us one body
in you.”

All Creation Sings also includes a diverse array of African American spirituals. The ELW has a few spirituals included, but many of them are not accessible to all congregations because of the need for a soloist to lead the singing. Most of the spirituals in the new supplement can be led without a cantor or soloist. Some of the included spirituals are “Deep River,” “Welcome Table,” “Oh, When the Saints Go Marching In,” “Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning,” and “Every Time I Feel the Spirit.”

The team that compiled *All Creation Sings* was intentional about including non-English songs and hymns. Many of the songs are only in the original language with English phonetic pronunciations at the bottom. In the new hymnal there are songs in Arabic, Finnish, Spanish, Swahili, Xhosa, Urdu, Hebrew, and French. Other songs are attributed to a culture, but not sung in the original language.

The ELCA has become very intentional and inclusive in the past 16 years since the publication of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. With the use of supplemental books, our worship can reflect those changes. *All Creation Sings* offers church leaders new liturgies, prayers, and current music. Introducing its new songs into the service could open congregations to different ways of worshipping, using new music, old hymn tunes with updated lyrics, and different languages. 💧





Camp Friends & Their Families at the Wedding of Pastors Jocelyn Johnston & Ryan Pusch

FRIENDS FOR LIFE & FOR THE CHURCH



Amanda Best

Member of St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Shadyside

My book group just celebrated its 10th anniversary. For a whole decade, this group has convened every other month to enjoy one another's company, laugh, eat snacks, and discuss our most recent read. We've been reading books together for 10 years, but the friendships among us are older than the book group itself; forged through many years of involvement at Camp Lutherlyn.

We know from research done by the American Camping Association that children who go to camp report increased self-esteem, friendship skills, and social comfort, and that this creates an environment where friendships are easily formed and deeply held. I'd love to see a follow-up study on the persistence of camp friendships through adulthood.

In the case of church-affiliated outdoor ministries, I suspect it might point to themes like increased feelings of belonging and participation in the larger church body, mutually inspiring intergenerational relationships, and an increased sense of community and support in times of challenge.

If you've been to a Friday night worship at Lutherlyn, you've witnessed the singing of *Peace* by Jaime Rickert, accompanied by a handful of guitars and about a million tears as campers say goodbye. This song is the official closing of a week of camp at Lutherlyn.



"Though the years may fall between us,
we must never fear the distance,
we are one in God forever,
in our minds and in our hearts."

In my own life, I have found that my camp friendships persist despite years and distance. My relationships formed at Lutherlyn have given me a sense of welcome and a soft place to land in the larger ELCA—even as far away as Soldotna, AK, where my old camp friend Meredith serves as a pastor. In my own life, there has been almost nothing as enriching and life-giving as my friendships from camp. Peace, my friends. 💧



CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION SKILLS



Pastor Peter D. Asplin

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If you are reading this article, you may well be a church leader. If you are a leader in the church, then you've seen disagreement in the church. It may seem counterintuitive, but disagreement in the church—conflict in the church—is normal. It's so normal that we even see conflict played out in the pages of scripture.

When the believers are gathered after Pentecost, it doesn't take long for two of them to begin lying to the people around them (Acts 4-5). Later on, Peter and Paul, and Timothy and Silas are all involved in various conflicts. Even early, faithful Christians had different ideas for what ministry is and who does it.

But we see in Acts that conflict leads to growth. The discernment of the church led to new ideas, new missions and the Gospel going forth.

We've been through a time of deep conflict in the country and in our culture during the past decade. In our congregations, we often find ourselves dividing over mission, hymn selection, budgets, and even bundles of joy (they can be noisy, you know).

What I have learned by with congregations facing conflict, is that when the people of God commit to working through the conflict well, it can lead to much joy.

Actively listening to those who hold different positions is important. Remaining open to dialog and working hard to understand the other's hopes and dreams—and how the issue relates—is key. Where conflict is damaging, people engage in backchat and gossip, they hold secret meetings, and work to structure processes in order to silence other voices.

As a leader in the church, I welcome the opportunity to help people and congregations deal well with conflict. I mourn situations in which everyone is so focused on winning that they engage in behavior damaging to other people and the congregation.

For several years, I have led a workshop called "Conflict Transformation Skills for Congregations." This is a great resource for any congregation council and committee leaders who understand that learning to engage conflict well is productive as well as helpful and hopeful. Please reach out if you are interested in hearing more about it! 💧



MADAGASCAR GIFTS & THEIR STORIES



Lauren Wolcott

Synod Communicator

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Most days, the work of managing the backend of our website and payment processor is not the stuff of great stories; more routine than rousing. Yet, one otherwise typical Monday, I logged in and muttered, "Um, guys, you're not going to believe this... "

The synod had launched its Madagascar Relief Fund appeal less than a week prior, and I was looking at donations that surpassed our entire \$5,000 goal in the span of just a few days. The donations continued to arrive day by day as the total doubled, tripled, quadrupled, eventually reaching nearly \$80,000 and surpassing our goal by more than 1,200 percent! I had a front row seat to witness the outpouring of generosity from our synod as it happened in real time.

It made me wonder about the stories behind this deluge of love and support. The motivation is clear enough, our companion synod in Madagascar has been struggling through catastrophic events: drought, famine, fire, and on top of it all, covid. But I wanted to know more about exactly *how* these donations came to be. From gifts of \$20 to \$10,000, sometimes multiple gifts from the same giver, what was happening behind every check signature and every click of the donate-now button? My suspicion was that there had been much creativity and long-term cultivation of generosity afoot, and with just a few emails, the stories began to come

to light. These are just a few:

"Emmanuel has members who have experienced hunger, storm damage, and flooding. This is emotional and personal. Every week during the collection period, we included a story from information provided by the synod and a reminder to give. A few people gave a lot, and many gave something. Marsha Kennedy, president of church council, says, 'Pastor Linda went to Madagascar and we feel connected. She had been to the seminary in Bezaha and told us how the students depend on the growing rice to feed their families. Losing that harvest is devastating.' Councilmember Judy Mayhood says, 'Everybody needs help when there is a natural disaster. And we knew that not many people in the world knew about this disaster.'"

Pastor Linda Theophilus, Emmanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, Eastmont

"First Greensburg has a history of giving generously, so it comes as no surprise that members exercised that generosity to help our neighbors in Madagascar. Members utilized First's matching funds program

to help their generosity go further. That program sets aside a portion of annual trust fund distributions to match gifts made by members, and has since 2002. It is intended to invite our members into generous giving."

Pastor Chris Combs, First Evangelical Lutheran Church, Greensburg

"Having personally traveled to Madagascar and spoken about our connection definitely prepared the hearts of our council and congregation to want to respond. One of the council members asked if our youth group could organize a fundraiser dinner; that's when the help started pouring in. Our church secretary and her son, now in college, had planned a similar dinner for his senior project, so they were able to provide vital information for planning. Another member acquired seed money to purchase groceries using Thrivent Action Teams. To help our money stretch even further, a couple from the congregation volunteered to supply all of the sauce. Not only did they supply it, but they made it homemade from tomatoes picked from the church garden and another member's garden.

Youth and adults turned out to make food, some stood by the road with signs; they were passionate and inspiring. When the night was done, we had passed out 150 meals. At the same time, someone felt so moved by the difficulties in Madagascar and the efforts of our youth that they wrote a matching donation check. Together that added up to the amount our congregation was blessed to be able to share in support of our brothers and sisters in Madagascar."

Pastor Brandon Johns, St. Peter's Lutheran Church, Evans City

"At Our Redeemer, McMurray, synodical and ELCA opportunities to support ministries with both money and service are regularly shared with the whole congregation. While the council chooses to respond to some appeals with a congregational commitment, it's our joyful experience the other requests often evoke a response from individuals with a passion for that specific need and ministry. The Madagascar Relief Fund spoke

to one member who was looking for a way to faithfully use his resources to make a difference in the lives of others."

Pastor Ann Schmid, Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, McMurray

"St. John's congregation council followed the synod's example and set up our own matching fund appeal by taking a sum from our endowment fund and challenged the members of the congregation, through a personal letter and a sermon, to match that gift with individual contributions. The congregation not only matched the initial gift, but also surpassed it!

Two people come to mind who were very instrumental in fostering support for global missions. The late Pastor Len Schulz and his wife, the late Peg Schulz. Their passion for global missions came partly from their experiences as missionaries in India during the '60s and '70s. Both recruited members of St. John's to participate in a mission trip to Madagascar in the '90s which was organized by our synod. I believe that the connections made by these participants, along with the passion for global mission from Pastor Schulz and Peg, have an impact on the membership of St. John's that continues today."

Pastor Mike Robinson, St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Perrysville

One final story I'd like to offer is about those who worked behind the scenes of this appeal. A small, committed group planned and refined how to bring this campaign to the larger synod. This team has also been in direct conversation with the Tulear Synod and Bezaha Seminary in Madagascar (sometimes at late hours and through translated Zoom calls) along with the ELCA Companion Synod Relationships staff to determine the best means of distributing the relief funds. The team was Bob David, Pastor Brandon Johns, Bishop Kurt Kusserow, Pastor Ed Sheehan, Pastor Melissa Stoller, and myself. Soon, our synod will be looking for additional people with a heart for our companion synod to continue nurturing this relationship and create new stories to tell of our mutual love and care. 💧



MEETING OUR NEIGHBORS GRANTS



Judi Rogers

Member of St. John's Lutheran Church, North Versailles

In the fall of 2021, St. John's Lutheran Church in North Versailles was asking the question that many congregations were asking. How do we navigate our way out of the pandemic and find ourselves and our neighbors again? For St. John's, the answer was to hold a new event and offer it completely free of charge to the community.

After 18 months of covid restrictions, it was refreshing and invigorating for the people of St. John's to gather after worship to brainstorm ideas and hold planning meetings. The process enabled folks to get reacquainted with each other, as well as to get to know Pastor Kimberly Greway, just recently called to serve at St. John's.

What emerged was a Fall Festival event, geared toward children, but hopefully fun for adults as well. Posters were hung at various locations, and invitations were posted to neighborhood Facebook pages. Handouts were shared at MA's Pantry, the local food distribution site sponsored by St. John's and other area churches. An outdoor banner and a welcome flag were purchased. But would anyone come? Yes, they did!

On the last Saturday in October, more than 150 children and adults showed up to enjoy the food and fun. Several "trunk or treat" cars welcomed guests outside the front door. Activity stations inside kept everyone moving around the building—from story time in the

library, to scary pumpkins in the choir room, to an obstacle course in the back hallway—with treats and small prizes at each location. The large social hall featured a craft area, pizza and popcorn snacks, and a basket raffle for the grown-ups. Stations in the sanctuary and the pastor's office helped ensure that guests felt welcome exploring all parts of the building.

"The event brought in people from the community who otherwise would not visit the church," said Pastor Greway. "But it also brought together church members who were eager to work together again."

"The day was a whirlwind of activity," she continued. "But our members and our guests from the neighborhood were not all that was swirling around St. John's building that day. The Holy Spirit was surely moving among us all as well, and I think everyone could feel it." ***St. John's is most grateful for the funding of this event through a "Meeting our Neighbor Grant" from the synod's Mission Endowment Fund.*** 💧



PITTSBURGH COMPLINE CHOIR



Pastor Brian Bennett

Campus Pastor, Lutheran Campus Ministry in Greater Pittsburgh
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Over thirty years ago, the Pittsburgh Compline Choir was formed by the late John Becker, whom we lost just this past December. A trip to the famed compline in Seattle at Saint Mark's Episcopal Cathedral inspired John to begin a choir in the same vein. Several other choirs also had connections to Saint Mark's compline ministry, but in Pittsburgh, rather than being connected to a congregation, the ministry began in connection with the Lutheran Campus Ministry in Greater Pittsburgh. As John Becker was married to the campus pastor, the Rev. Ruth Bosch Becker, it made perfect sense.

Since then, the Pittsburgh Compline Choir has prayed compline at Heinz Memorial Chapel every Sunday evening during the academic year. The music has included a mix of ancient and modern styles. Over time, a number of directors have composed their own works for the service.

Our current director, Dr. Mark A. Boyle, has created "The Pittsburgh Rite," a unique compline setting for the choir with influences from *Lutheran Book of Worship*, John Becker, and other classic sources. The choir itself has seen a variety of members over the year: local clergy and rostered leaders, university students, community members. The makeup of the choir is a unique gathering of individuals who come to rest in all of the spiritual gifts that compline has to offer.

The pandemic has hindered the choir's efforts. For nearly two years, the choir could not gather in Heinz Memorial Chapel.

Dr. Boyle, however, was not content to let compline sit idle. While not the same, the Pittsburgh Compline Choir went online offering a simplified chant version, one voice at a time, and streamed across both the choir's Facebook page and YouTube channel.

Thankfully, with the connections of a few members of the choir, weekly in-person services have returned again at local congregations.

First Lutheran Church, Downtown, a longtime supporter of the choir, opened its doors to the choir in January and February. For Lent, the choir sang at Church of the Redeemer, an Episcopal congregation in Squirrel Hill. Dr. Boyle is in regular communication with the director and staff of Heinz Memorial Chapel and is currently planning for the choir to return to the chapel in the fall semester of 2022. 💧



TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK: MAY 2-6



Kim Maravich

Member of Hope Lutheran Church, Cranberry

As I finished straightening the desks in eager anticipation for the first day of school, I looked up to see bright blue eyes and a big toothy smile. A towheaded boy stood in my classroom doorway. I'd secretly been looking forward to having him in second grade.

Liam was a shining example of positivity, despite the hardships he'd faced in his eight short years. Born exposed to drugs and in foster care his entire life, Liam had felt the insecurity of abandonment. He also had physical ailments, including major hearing loss, requiring cochlear implants, and acute renal failure, necessitating daily peritoneal dialysis. A dialysis bag hung from his abdomen, limiting his activities and movements. Quite a burden to carry for a small body.

He was easy to love, but to say I felt inadequate to teach and care for him would be an understatement. Each morning before school, I prayed, begging God to help me be a vessel of His love, to serve not only Liam but all of my 22 students. I found Scripture deeply grounding as I readied my heart for the day.

Liam was just one of many students I encountered in my years of teaching who craved a caring presence and support. Teaching is much more than phonics and mathematics. Every student comes to the classroom with their own story, their own burdens to bear. Some, like Liam, have

evident physical or behavioral manifestations. Some appear outwardly perfect but suffer from internal trials. As teachers, it's not our business to know all of the details, but it IS our job to demonstrate kindness.

Good teachers work hard and dedicate their lives to the education and protection of their students. It is a vocation, an important calling, that goes well beyond seven hours in a classroom. In 1 Corinthians, Paul reminds the Christians at Corinth that wise teachers have been appointed and given special abilities by God to build up the body of Christ.

Whether you are an educator, a parent, or someone who simply engages with the community, *you* make a difference. You can become the face of Christ to a hurting world, lifting up others through your words and deeds, through your temperament and reactions. You can bring light to a dark world.

We are all individuals called to serve this world. We teach through our interactions, with daily opportunities to make positive differences in the lives of others. 💧

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 Angela Smith

10 Years: Pastor Rebecca Dittenhafer
Pastor Joseph Murdy
Pastor Nathaneil Christman

15 Years: Pastor Brian Evans

20 Years: Pastor Patricia Schneck
Pastor Kimberly Rapczak

25 Years: Pastor Keith Deckinger
Pastor Larry Kemp
Pastor Matthew Stabe

30 Years: Pastor Allyn Itterly

35 Years: Deacon Mark Nurnberger

40 Years: Pastor David Yoder

45 Years: Pastor Wilfred Goetze
Pastor Allen Riethmiller
Pastor James Higgins

55 Years: Pastor Kirk Bish
Pastor Norman Nething Jr
Pastor Philip Williams
Pastor Robert Rigg
Pastor David Matthews Jr

60 Years: Pastor Robert Strobel

New Calls:

Pastor Beth Clementson,
Associate Pastor of St. John's of Highland
Lutheran Church, Pittsburgh

Pastor Margarethe Galbraith-Cordes,
Pastor of Hope Lutheran Church, Beaver
(Brighton Township), and Holy Trinity Lutheran
Church, Beaver

Pastor Gregg Knepp,
Pastor of St. Mark's, Brookline

Seminarian Katie McNeal,
Pastor of St. John Lutheran Church, Mars
(Ordination scheduled April 24)

Pastor Alexander Sumo,
Pastor of the congregations of PLUM

Births:

Pastor Peggy Suhr-Barkley
welcomed a grandson, Carter,
March 14, 2022

Retirement:

Deacon Rick Frederick

In Memoriam:

Gordon Lubold,
Father of Pastor Paul Lubold,
February 16, 2022

Alice Godzich,
Grandmother of Holly Schmitt,
February 19, 2022

Grace Tyson,
Grandmother of Pastor Chris Hough,
February 22, 2022

Carol Kusserow,
Wife of Pastor Ralph Kusserow and
Mother of Bishop Kurt Kusserow,
February 23, 2022

Frances Nagy,
Wife of Pastor Z. Louis Nagy,
February 26, 2022

Prayer Requests:

Denny Barkley (husband of Pastor
Peggy Suhr-Barkley)

Deacon Mark Nurnberger

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

Installations:

Pastor Kerri Clark,
Associate Pastor of Our Redeemer,
McMurray, February 1, 2022

Welcome:

Pastor Alexander Sumo,
From Southern Ohio Synod

SYNOD STAFF PRESENCE | JAN-MAR 22

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:**

BALM, Butler
Christ, Charleroi
Christ, Duquesne
Downtown Campus
Ministry

Emanuel Heilman,
Ford City
Emmanuel, Eastmont
Emmanuel, Prospect
Evangelical, Worthington
Grace, Manorville
Grace@ Calvary, Butler
Harrold Zion, Greensburg
Holy Trinity, Beaver
Holy Trinity, Irwin
Hope, Beaver
Hope, Cranberry

Jacob's, Masontown
Kiski Valley Cluster
Messiah, Morningside
Our Redeemer, McMurray
Perry Highway, Wexford
PLUM Congregations
Prince of Peace,
Pleasant Hills
PSALM – Lutheran
Campus Ministry
Salem, Delmont
Seaman Memorial,
Zelienople
St. Andrew, Pittsburgh
St. James, Ligonier
St. John of Highland,
McCandless

St. John's, Connellsville
St. John, Mars
St. John's,
Connoquenessing
St. John's, Perrysville
St. Mark's, Brookline
St. Paul's UCC, Latrobe
St. Paul's, Scottsdale
St. Paul's, Washington
St. Paul's, Carmichaels
Stewart Avenue, Pittsburgh
Trinity, Connellsville
Trinity, Latrobe
Trinity, Wexford
Zion, Penn Hills
Zions-First, Ambridge

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.

July



Thiel College is an independent liberal arts college rooted in the Lutheran tradition. Offering distinctive programs, Thiel provides an accessible and inclusive learning environment that emphasizes service to society.



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PENNSYLVANIA
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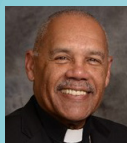
Wayfarer

Issue No. 10 STORIES FROM THE ROAD



MORE STORIES & CONNECTIONS:
facebook.com/swpasynod

Devotional: SHARE YOUR STORY



Bishop Abraham Allende

Acting Bishop, January-March 2022

Before his ascension into heaven, Jesus commissioned his disciples to "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation." (Mark 16:15) In word and deed they were to proclaim to a doubting, yet hungry world how Jesus Christ fulfills the deepest yearning of the human heart. Today, that commission of proclaiming the good news falls to us.

We have little problem telling friends and strangers alike about a good book we've read, or a movie or a television program we've seen, the successes or failures of our sports teams. On social media, we share with the world all about our family members, complete with photos, or how quickly we solved the latest Wordle puzzle.

How could we, as Christians, apply the same ease of sharing when it comes to our faith? How could we, as Christians, witness to a Jesus who still breaks into our present world, giving himself to us anew at the font, through the word, the meal, and the prayers of our gathered community at worship?

Jesus calls us to proclaim the good news that violence and death, evil and destruction, no longer have the last word. Many in this world have yet to hear this good and wondrous gospel that satisfies their desire for forgiveness, for reconciliation, for wholeness and joy. It falls to us to point the way. 💧