

Issue No. 14 | May 2023

# 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



“The promise is for you  
and your children and for  
all who are far off—for all  
whom the Lord our God  
will call.”

Acts 2:39

Cover Photo: Canva

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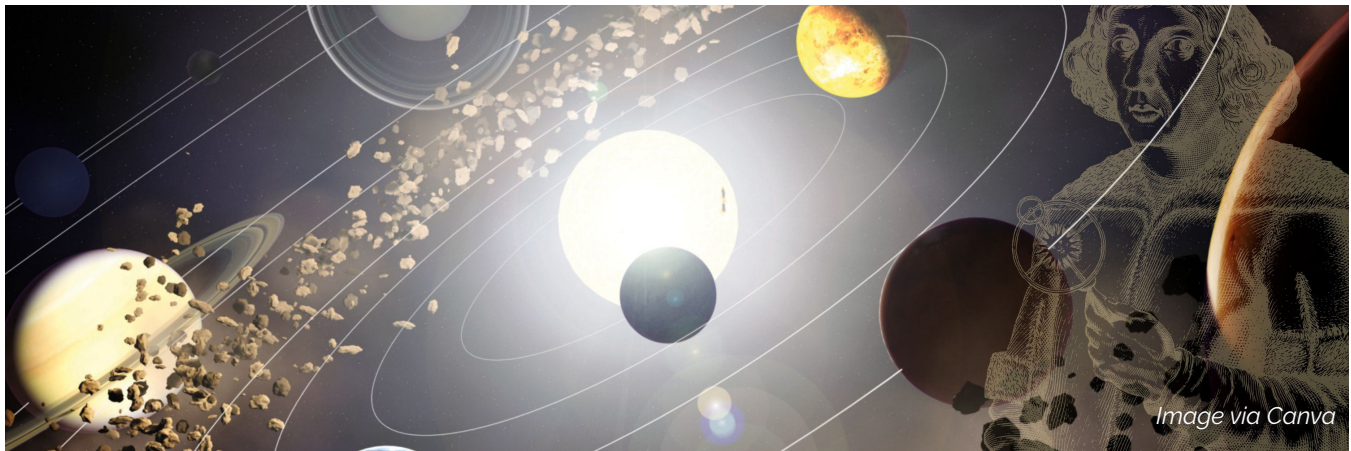
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## COMMEMORATING NICOLAUS COPERNICUS



**Bishop Kurt F. Kusserow**

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**W**e often say, “we live by faith and not by sight.” This is most certainly true, and there may be no better day to celebrate this truth than the Seventh Sunday of Easter. Except, perhaps May 24, which this year is the following Wednesday.

Why the Seventh Sunday of Easter? And why May 24? Glad you asked. Let’s start with the church year and make our way to one of the two scientists commemorated by our church on May 24: Nicolaus Copernicus.

It is our practice to light the paschal candle on Sundays during Easter. The lit candle is a liturgical reminder of the bodily presence of Christ within the community of disciples during those first 40 days after his resurrection. (Acts 1:1-11) The candle is extinguished during the reading of the Gospel on Ascension Day, symbolizing Christ ascending bodily from their view. So when we gather next, on the Seventh Sunday of Easter, we leave the Paschal Candle unlit. On *that* Sunday our liturgical practice invites us to embrace an odd kind of confidence—that the Church lives by faith and not by sight.

I call it an odd kind of confidence because it seems that the regular kind of confidence that we seek in our daily lives looks more like sight. It feels like having my feet firmly on the ground. Confidence means having a solid

foundation of logic to support a conviction, or having documentable proof to support a claim.

It is the desire for this kind of confidence that leads us to find proof texts in the Bible to support our view of God’s will for us (or more likely for how we think our neighbors should behave!). I recall clearly having this foundation knocked out from under me my freshman year at Thiel College. Dr. Good was teaching an introduction to the Bible class, and when he came to the idea of an etiological story, I nearly walked out.

To hear a college professor and Lutheran pastor suggest that some of the earliest stories in the Bible were etiological – that is, stories that were created to explain the way the world is and not documentaries about historical events – was too much for me; I despaired that my faith had lost its foundation. But his class was actually a profound gift to me. The result was that I learned to rest my faith on an odd kind of confidence. I experienced a sort of Copernican revelation.

The whole Church lived through the initial trauma and eventual freedom of this kind of faith test. I mean to describe the hundreds of years it took for the Church to move from strongly rejecting Copernicus' theory of a heliocentric universe (dramatized in Galileo's trial of 1633) to fully embracing it as true (which the Vatican finally did in 1992!). The point of concern was that if the authority of the Bible could be called into question in matters of cosmology, the foundation of Christian faith would be lost.

The world view found in Holy Scripture presents the earth as a solid, rather flat thing, with the sky arching high above it—the firmament. This firmament is so strong that it holds the sun and moon and stars up there so that they don't fall down to the earth. (Revelation 12:4a) The heliocentric theory that Copernicus advanced presents the earth as a sphere flying through space with no foundation at all except momentum and gravity. The stability of our world, it turns out, is “grounded” in movement! Standing on terra firma with this world view in mind requires an odd kind of confidence indeed!

It takes this same kind of confidence to “live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20) It turns out that you can't knock the foundation out from under this kind of faith, because there isn't one! Or to say it better, the foundation of this faith is the living witness of the community of believers flying through history, moved by the Spirit's leading from this continent to that, and held together by the gravity of the love of God in Christ Jesus to which the Holy Scriptures bear witness.

The revolution in world view initiated by Copernicus' work has not changed our experience of the sun rising every morning and setting every night. The discovery of etiological stories in Holy Scripture need not threaten the foundations of the Christian faith. In fact, it is often when our personal faith has the rug pulled out from under it by experiences of grief or hurt, or even by deeper learning, that we embrace more fully that odd kind of confidence—we do live by faith and not by sight! 💧



**FRIDAY, JUNE 16**  
**6-9 PM**  
*Online via Zoom*

**SATURDAY, JUNE 17**  
**9 AM - 5 PM**  
*At PennWest California*

Synod Assembly is the highest legislative authority of our synod and will be making decisions that impact 151 congregations covering 10 counties in southwest PA. This year's assembly will begin with an evening of business conducted online via Zoom, followed by a day of gathering together in person to worship, work, and remember that we are always better together. Non-voting members can watch the livestream on Facebook.

**REGISTER BY MONDAY, JUNE 5 | [SWPASYNOD.ORG/ASSEMBLY2023](https://swpasynod.org/assembly2023)**



Holy Trinity Lutheran Church Chicora

## PENTECOST: OUT OF THE ASHES



### Pastor Joseph Boomhower

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**G**rant Osborne hints in his book, *Acts: Verse by Verse*, that the church following the Pentecost experience got it wrong. The first converts hunkered down and waited for those the spirit would change to come to them in Jerusalem. They had misunderstood the words of Isaiah, “a light to the Gentiles,” to mean that by some stroke of fortune and by being in the center of faith, Jerusalem, folks would just naturally be attracted to the new way.

Commentators see things differently. Peter’s speech in Acts 2:38 is an appeal for people to deal with reality since believers are now “accountable to the living God” (according to *A Theology of Luke and Acts* by Darrell Bock). In Acts, they were hunkered down until chapter eight, the stoning of Stephen combined with a ratcheted-up pogrom. Oddly enough, it was that which forced them to leave: diaspora. As we read Peter’s speech, it becomes clearer that Pentecost takes on a different meaning as even he understands that this incredible event has become a training, a preparation for those who have heard from long ago the words of Joel 2:28-32 to carry the message out to the world (Osborne 69).

**All this comes by way of introduction to Holy Trinity, Chicora. We, and most likely so many others, have experienced two “hunkering downs”—**the slow groan of a family church hopefully handed down from one generation to another, and Covid. We woke in confusion, not like Easter, in fact more like the groundhog searching the shadows. And yet it was like new life set in with God’s surprises.

Out of ashes we saw the gift of a new time! As we started this new year, we experienced a real live miracle of healing where, like the Pentecost people, “Awe came upon everyone because many wonders and signs were being done...” (Act 2:42-43) It was as if we had discovered the Spirit taking residence in our hearts. What we do now we do in joy with our faces toward the future: worshiping, praying, breaking bread, studying, fellowshiping with a generosity that celebrates and recalls God’s gift at baptism. It was easy, really, to ask post-Covid: what kind of church do we want to be and what do we have to lose?

Osborne has this wonderful word of challenge to the Pentecost church: “The description of church life in verses 43-47 produces a thrilling church I would love to be a part of: it exhibits awe, the sharing of goods, helping those around, and having the type of deep fellowship we all long to experience. This is what going to church is all about and shows to even the most rugged individualists that we all should be a part of a local body.” 💧



## DIFFERENT CHURCHES, SAME GRACE



### Pastor Richard Grance

*Retired, Member of First Evangelical Lutheran Church, New Kensington*  
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It all began some years ago when my wife, Barbara, was walking our dog, Miggs, in our neighborhood. She would often stop to talk with neighbors. While getting to know a new neighbor she came to learn that the rear of the church building in which they were worshipping was being threatened by a collapsing hillside.

Led by the Spirit she thought: "Why not let them share our building?" She told me about it. I thought it was a good idea and suggested that she share the idea with our congregation council. After some discussion, and after talking with lead members of Vermont Baptist, it was decided to offer the use of our building for worship, at a time that didn't conflict with our worship time. They graciously accepted this offer.

This arrangement has been working well for both congregations for approximately the past seven years.

Shortly after this arrangement, First Lutheran and Vermont Baptist began worshipping together quarterly. These quarterly combined services developed into worshipping together on a monthly basis, alternating which congregation would lead worship. In talking with members of Vermont Baptist, it became obvious that the Lutheran liturgy is very foreign and confusing to them. Also, while it is our practice to celebrate Holy Communion each week, that is not their practice. So at

the end of worship on the Sundays when Vermont is in charge, their pastor has our local interim, Pastor Dona Van Eck, invite all those present to participate in a "mini" liturgy of Holy Communion. Also, when it is their turn to lead worship, Pastor Derrick Ulmer, begins his sermon by singing something to introduce his message.

**Even though we each have different styles of worship, it is still the same grace of Jesus Christ that is being proclaimed by each community of believers.**

Following each worship service we gather for a fellowship meal. The host congregation provides the main dishes, while the other brings desserts. This sharing of our facility and gathering together for worship and social time has given members of both congregations the opportunity to become better acquainted and discover friendships. This has encouraged and developed some strong bonds between members of both congregations. 💧



## APPROVED FOR MINISTRY



### Kurt Hansmann

Joint Candidacy Committee of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod and West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod

*O God, increase the faith and energy of your Church to desire and work for the salvation of all people, that they might be freed from sin and that hope may be renewed in many hearts, to the increase of the kingdom of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. LBW 45*

**D**uring an otherwise nondescript January weekend in Uniontown, PA, the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod received a jolt of faith and energy when two of our own, Jamie L. Ulrich and W. Roger Randolph III, were granted approval for Minister of Word and Sacrament by the synod's Candidacy Committee. Thanks be to God! Jamie and Roger came to this benchmark of ministry following largely diverse paths.

One (Jamie) is a "cradle Lutheran," nurtured by the faithful of Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Glenshaw, PA, before completing her undergraduate work at Thiel College, finding her way to Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus, OH, and an internship at Epiphany Lutheran Church in Pickerington, OH.

The other (Roger) didn't become Lutheran until his mid-teens and did so upon locating First Lutheran Church in downtown Pittsburgh (where we met), then attending the University of Pittsburgh, United Lutheran Seminary in Philadelphia, and interning at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Arlington, MA, all while serving in the Army National Guard.

However, it's what Jamie and Roger have in common that we celebrate. Both are exceedingly intelligent, deeply faithful, can command a room (including one occupied

by a candidacy committee), and recognized at an early age a sense of call to minister to the people of God in Christ Jesus.

Which leads to my point. Both are leaders and raising up leaders in the Church should never be taken for granted and is worthy of being celebrated. **As we celebrate with this brother and sister in Christ, though, we hold up in prayer our five brothers and sisters in Christ who continue to navigate their arduous journey through the candidacy process, with hope that they too will some day provide a jolt of faith and energy to that which they love so much.**

In the meantime, as Jamie and Roger await their first call, I humbly pray that for the people of the Southwestern PA Synod hope may be renewed in many hearts by the burgeoning ministries of our two new gifted leaders. 💧



## MADAGASCAR UPDATE



**Pastor Melissa L. Stoller**

*Director for Evangelical Mission & Assistant to the Bishop*  
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**T**he world had been navigating the pandemic for over a year when regions of Madagascar began to suffer a series of natural disasters, adding layers of struggle to an already struggling economy. For years, the Southwestern PA Synod has been in companion synod relationship with the Tulear Synod and neighboring Malagasy synods, and when the leaders of these communities asked for help, the church answered. In the summer of 2021 the synod council sent an immediate gift and then invited our synod to match another gift later that summer. The response was overwhelming, and in partnership with the Malagasy Synod, seminary, the larger Malagasy Lutheran Church leadership, Global Health Ministries, and current and past ELCA Global service staff, we have been able to not only respond to the immediate needs of our siblings in Christ but also accompany them in growing new projects and initiatives to build capacity to withstand future disasters.

Within the Church in the World Committee, a Madagascar working group has formed to renew the companion synod relationship. **I spoke with Pastor Brandon Johns, the chair of the working group, about their work to joyfully engage relationship building with our siblings in Madagascar.**

**What first drew you to engage with the Malagasy Lutheran Church?**

*Before coming back to Southwestern PA, the congregation I served as pastor had strong global mission connections and a culture of partnership and accompaniment. This led to my interest in wanting to be a part of that ministry—it felt like a call to me. When I returned to Southwestern PA, I saw the open letter from Bishop Kusserow inviting people*

*to meet the new presidents in Madagascar. It spoke to me, this spiritual connection.*

**What do you remember about your travel in Madagascar?**

*The sense of hospitality. So many of the people in the places and communities we visited were very impoverished, but they were incredibly hospitable. It reminded me of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, when he spoke of the people of Macedonia who gave generously and joyfully even in their poverty. When you showed up, people had gifts and songs of praise to welcome you. Their church didn't have a roof, but they gave things to you because you were their gift. I witnessed how the body of Christ is the world around, even in places where people do not speak the same language as you, and*



cannot even drink the water, but there they are: praying, listening and relying on the same God as you.

One difficult thing for me was all of the churches that had some sort of need and were hoping that we may be able to financially support them. We weren't prepared to do that in the moment, to do all the things asked of us. I remember our delegation had conversation afterwards, looking at all the asks and thinking, there's no way in the world we could raise up this kind of money to support all these things. And then, just a couple of years later, the generosity of our synod and beyond grew the gifts. With God there is a way!

### **How did the synod appeal for Madagascar come into place?**

We were getting word that there was famine and drought. It was the worst it had been in recent memory and the human suffering was vast. They were still reeling from the effects of Covid, starvation was widespread, and children couldn't be in school because they had to find food. We had synod funds we could send right away as an emergency response, and we had \$5,000 to offer as a match. The response was incredible, we were able to raise more than \$70,000 from people and congregations in our synod and beyond.

### **It is amazing! How were the funds used?**

We have been in conversation and partnership with the leaders in Madagascar about this. Half went to support the Bazaha seminary; seminarians always have hunger issues because they cannot work while studying. The seminary also used these funds to ensure safe drinking water. We recently received word that the projects have been very successful, and they would like to install a second water tower which would help them become water independent. We approved the project in its entirety. We did not send all the money we raised at once because the leaders shared with us that it would not have been healthy to do so without a plan, it would destabilize them and our relationship, so we are partnering together in this relational system.

The other half we initially sent to relieve the suffering that resulted from the famine and drought. We have continued to work with Malagasy, the ELCA, and global partners to relieve human suffering as a result of poor medical conditions and lack of water. In partnership with local teams and leaders, we are working with Global Health Ministry in southern Madagascar to construct deep wells with water for drinking and drip irrigation for crops. In addition to training folks to maintain the wells, GHM also partners to provide community health clinics. The goal is total well being.

### **There are a lot of partners working together to support the Malagasy Lutheran Church, aren't there?**

Yes. In addition to our synod, there are three other U.S. synods that have relationships with Malagasy Lutheran Synods. Representatives gather online every few months to meet with ELCA representatives, current and former Global Mission personnel and Malagasy representatives when possible. This group and our synod's companion synod team are looking forward to continuing to nurture the hospitality and relationship with our Malagasy sisters and brothers. And we are hoping to host the president of our companion synod here in the fall of 2024.

### **Why do you think is it important to nurture these relationships?**

It is the same reason the prayers of intercession are important: they open us up to the wider needs and joys of the world. These companion synod relationships lift us up and help us to see God at work in a bigger way.

There was a moment, when I was in Madagascar, riding in a van, where I saw a young mother on the side of the road with a child on her hip. I thought that kid is the same age as mine, in fact she and I are the same age, and we both want the same thing, abundant life for our kids. That is the human connection, that is the call—to see God in our neighbor, not just the neighbor who looks like me. For in the face of our neighbor—here God already was, is and will be. 💧



## WHERE TO BEGIN?



### Pastor Martha McCreight

Pastor of Zion Lutheran Church, Penn Hills

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Last Fall, the council at Zion Lutheran Church, Penn Hills, prepared to gather for our first in-person retreat since before the pandemic. It was a time to build relationships among council members new and old and to discern where the Holy Spirit was calling us as people of faith and the congregation as a whole.

And I, as their pastor, found myself short on ideas or inspiration from the resources that I already owned to fill the blank slate that was before us. (After all, *Pandemic Recovery 101* was never offered at my alma mater, Luther Seminary.)

Enter in Deacon Beth Caywood and the synod's Resource Ministry. I had never made use of the resource center before (either in its old location or in its current one) but had always heard that it was helpful to my colleagues and figured it was a good place to start.

I first reached out to Deacon Beth over email and explained the need for ideas and assistance and she instantly connected with me and asked for more specifics to help streamline the work that lie ahead. Questions such as "what is the goal for the retreat," "who will facilitate," "will it be onsite at Zion or another location," "will there be spiritual development and fellowship," "one day or multiple," etc.

Then it took only one visit to the resource center and discussion with Deacon Beth before I was sent home with six or seven books, checked out and loaded up into my car to begin my work of planning and preparation. I was amazed by the amount of material that was in the center, covering many various topics, needs, and ministries.

I felt encouraged by my discussions with Deacon Beth and the different avenues she suggested that I could explore with the council. But more importantly, I was encouraged by the collegiality and partnership that we shared both beforehand and, in her follow-up communication. (\*Cue up the Apostle Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians, the 12th chapter.\*)

The synod's Resource Ministry proved to be a vital asset to me in my work and I give thanks for the gift that it is to both rostered leaders and laypeople alike. I look forward to using it again in the future! 💧



## BROOKLINE'S BACKYARD ANGELS



### Pastor Gregg Knepp

Pastor of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Brookline  
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A family of five who recently immigrated from Central America, a single mother whose husband left her with an infant and a toddler, a family who lost everything in a local house fire, a grandmother raising her three grandchildren, and a foster family raising four young children who suffered neglect and abuse; these are common stories heard at Backyard Angel ministry of St. Mark's Lutheran Church, Brookline.

Backyard Angel is a free clothing ministry initiated in 2019. The congregation accepts donations of gently used clothing and offers them to anyone in the community. In less than four years, the effort has grown from a few racks of clothing to encompassing seven unused Sunday School classrooms.

Backyard Angel gives away a thousand articles of clothing and serves about fifty families each month. In addition to clothing, Backyard Angel offers shoes, winter jackets, and kitchen items. The ministry partners with local schools and non-profits including home nursing associations, foster care agencies, and Casa San Jose, which assists new immigrants find suitable housing. Backyard Angel even fills orders for schools, senior centers and youth agencies.

The cost of the ministry is negligible but it is volunteer intensive. Each week 10-12 volunteers are needed to sort and fold clothing, and assist "shoppers" on Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Cheryl Vergot, Backyard Angel

coordinator, shares, "I am grateful every week for the many congregation and community members as well as clients who volunteer."

The success of Backyard Angel prompted St. Mark's to initiate a free food share ministry last year. Susan Early coordinates weekly food donations of produce, bakery items, dairy products and non-perishable items from local grocery stores. St. Mark's distributes over a thousand pounds of food each Saturday morning. Like Backyard Angel, St. Mark's Food Share only requests people to volunteer quarterly and to bring some unused food items to donate back to the ministry.

Often it's a matter of discovering how ministry works best in your community then build upon it. I am always amazed at the tremendous outpouring of love at St. Mark's and the intentional prayer and evangelism incorporated into these remarkable ministries. Volunteers and donations of food and clothing are always needed and appreciated. 💧



# LUTHERAN SENIORLIFE



## Harold Aughton

*Director of System Marketing & Residential Facilities Management*  
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**W**ith over a century of caring, the mission of Lutheran SeniorLife is to transform health, wellness, and social services for those we serve and those who serve. Our goal is for seniors to live an Abundant Life™. We achieve this goal through our diverse mission-focused programs.

**Lutheran Service Society** is a community-based organization providing social services to people of all ages and backgrounds including meal delivery, senior centers, and adoption and foster care services. Through Meals on Wheels of Beaver County, volunteers deliver weekly meals to participants, ensuring they receive the necessary nutrients to maintain their health and well-being.

The goal of the **Visiting Nurses Association** is to help patients maintain their independence and quality of life at home. The VNA employs licensed and certified healthcare professionals for individuals in need of medical assistance and support. The VNA offers home health care, such as in-home nursing care, rehabilitative services, as well as hospice and medical social work services.

With centers in Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, and Lawrence counties, **LIFE** is a comprehensive healthcare and social support program designed to help older adults with chronic health conditions live independently in their homes and communities. The program

provides all-inclusive care to include primary medical care, preventive healthcare, and access to medical specialists.

**Passavant Community** is a senior living community situated on a 142-acre campus in Zelienople. It offers a range of housing and care options, including residential living, personal care, memory support, skilled nursing and rehabilitation. Residents have access to a variety of social activities and amenities, including an indoor pool, fitness center, on-site restaurants, a library, and an art studio.

**St. John Community** is a faith-based senior living community located on a scenic 25-acre campus in Mars. It offers a range of housing and care options, including residential living, personal care, memory support, skilled nursing and rehabilitation. The community provides residents with access to a variety of social activities and amenities, including an on-site chapel, a fitness center, a beauty salon, a library, game room and outdoor garden. 💧



## MANNA COVERING THE STREETS



### Pastor Peter D. Asplin

*Assistant to the Bishop*

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**T**hirteen years ago, House of Prayer Lutheran Church in Aliquippa resolved to follow God's call to care for others by feeding the hungry. This idea took shape in the form of a weekly meal, salad, dinner and dessert, provided for free to any one who comes in, without concern for where they live or what their income is. The program has grown. Now, as many as 80 people gather for fellowship and dinner. Manna depends on a diverse group of ministry partners, from churches to scout groups to extended families, cooking, cleaning and serving.

Over time, as Pastor Michael Sourwine and the core leaders of Manna got to know some of their regular guests, they came to discover that for some, getting to House of Prayer Lutheran Church was a challenge. It was a long walk from many of the centers of affordable housing in the community. And for those with young children, or who were elderly, or if the weather was a challenge, they couldn't make it to the Manna meal.

Jokingly, especially during the pandemic, the leaders of Manna would say, "if only we could take the dinner to where the people live!" And someone quipped, "if only we had a food truck." And from that joke an idea was born.

**As part of funding this project, House of Prayer applied for an Ethel Verney Grant.** Ethel Verney Grants are made possible by a bequest from Ethel L. Verney for "relief

and support of people living in poverty" on the territory of the SWPA Synod. The three-year grant has contributed to the purchase and equipping of the Manna Little Free Food Truck over the last year.

In the coming year, Pastor Sourwine and the leadership at Manna hope to bring the food truck to a number of low income housing communities in and around the Aliquippa area, serving people where they are.

Manna was excited to support the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod's Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration in March by feeding the worshipers at Berkeley Hills Lutheran Church in the North Hills a great meal of loaded nachos, as the group continues to learn how to care for their community in this new, exciting way. 💧

# CHURCH “GRANDPARENTS” (CONTINUED FROM BACK)

As new members of this congregation, it took us a couple weeks to find a pew where we felt most comfortable, in the middle of a number of other empty pews. After a short while, we became surrounded with children. It didn't take long for my husband to sing in the choir so I was left to worship by myself. One of the boys (about 8 at the time) took that as a reason to walk with me to communion each Sunday, making sure I had a communion cup & disposing of it for me afterward. What a joy!! How wonderful to be cared for!

**Barb Guenther**  
Trinity, Ellwood City

Mary and Jack Kantola were the ones who I sat with as a teenager going to the “traditional” service after my friends all left after the “contemporary” one, encouraging my love of Lutheran liturgy and hymnody. They always used their gifts in ways that made our church community stronger. Jack was a photographer and wood worker, and when we switched out the pews for chairs (a BIG DEAL,) he used all the wood from the pews to make special gifts, like the prayer box and cross that sit in my office even as I serve a church thousands of miles away.

**Pastor Erin Jones**  
Hot Metal Bridge Faith Community

I still keep in touch with the pastor's wife of my childhood youth. She ministered to me when I was in youth group and kept in touch as a young adult and played piano in my wedding. As years went by, we loosely kept in touch through a mutual friend who she had also ministered to as a young adult. When I lost my job five years ago, she happened to come back into my life out of the blue. She has since mentored me in the hard stages of caring for aging parents and navigating sibling relationships. Nearly 40 years later, I still respect and love her caring heart.

**Linda Slatt**  
Trinity, Wexford

When our children were tiny, Ernie and Frances Vosburg would come to all our special holiday dinners at our home. Ernie was a real character who always had a twinkle in his eye and a piece of candy in his pockets for our girls. Frances was the most reverent lady who always had a lap for them to sit on.

**Joan Berresford**  
St. John's, North Versailles

John and Valetta Bradosky had a wonderful, large garden in their backyard, along with a few greenhouses. John would invite my daughter, Lindsay, and us over in the springtime to allow Lindsay to dig up soil, plant tomatoes and anything else she'd like, and then periodically water them over the summer, until it was time to harvest. Lindsay loved digging in the dirt, and now is a full-fledged archaeologist! We will always be grateful for her “church grandparents.”

**Pastor Paul Gruesu**  
St. Matthias, Greensburg

My daughter started attending Sunday school at two years old because a woman, Cindy, offered to teach her. It's now seven years later and Cindy is still teaching her. Every kid should have a Ms. Cindy in their life; I am so thankful mine does.

**Bethany Calaiaro**  
Holy Trinity, Beechview

As children of a clergy couple, our twins were set up to spend time with parishioners from the beginning. I would often receive compliments on how well-behaved my kids were in church, but the obvious truth is that I had nothing to do with it—it was all the doing of these parishioners and of the twins themselves.

**Pastor Martin Galbraith**  
New Hope Freedom

# 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:

### May-July

10 Years: Deacon Sara Baublitz  
Pastor Kara Propst  
Pastor Christopher Suehr

15 Years: Pastor Erin Evans  
Pastor Paul Gruesu  
Pastor Michael Sourwine

20 Years: Deacon Mildred McCracken  
Pastor Alexander Sumo

25 Years: Deacon Dianna Wentz

30 Years: Pastor Martin Galbraith  
Pastor Douglas Heagy

35 Years: Pastor Barry Baughman  
Pastor Wayne Gillespie  
Pastor Susan Luttner

40 Years: Pastor Jerry Nuernberger

45 Years: Pastor Robert Gago  
Deacon Denise Hegemann

50 Years: Pastor Robert Musser  
Pastor Bruce Pedersen  
Pastor Raymond Ursin  
Pastor James N. West

55 Years: Pastor Robert Hawk  
Pastor Leonard Larsen  
Bishop Donald McCoid  
Pastor William Winzeler

60 Years: Pastor Lawrence Camberg  
Pastor William Hower  
Pastor Ralph Kusserow

## New Call:

**Pastors Jason and Jessica Felici,**  
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Latrobe

## Retirement:

**Pastor Peggy Suhr-Barkley,**  
July 1, 2023

## Births:

**Edward Orr George Hanssen,**  
son of Pastors Martha McCreight &  
David Hanssen, born April 6, 2023

## In Memoriam:

**Ted Kaltwasser,**  
father of Deb (Pastor Larry ) Mort,  
December 17, 2022

**Lynn Kaltwasser,**  
brother of Deb (Pastor Larry) Mort,  
January 4, 2023

**Neil Santoriello,**  
father of Deacon Amy Santoriello,  
January 14, 2023

**John Wilver,**  
January 18, 2023

**Ralph McGregor,**  
father of Pastor Jill McGregor,  
January 19, 2023

**Shirley Kappeler,**  
widow of Pastor Ed Kappeler,  
February 5, 2023

**Albert Mader,**  
mother of Annette (Pastor Mike)  
Robinson, February 9, 2023

**Donald Youkers,**  
father of Barb Nugent,  
February 10, 2023

**Pastor Hans Andrae,**  
February 13, 2023

**Margaret Dennis,**  
mother of Pastor Scott Dennis,  
February 27, 2023

**Jane Piper,**  
sister of Pastor Richard Neumann,  
February 28, 2023

**Florence Barkley,**  
mother of Denny Barkley (Pastor Peggy  
Suhr-Barkley), March 13, 2023

**Marta Hamme,**  
mother of Pastor Jess Felici, April 15,  
2023

## Prayer Requests:

Pastor Janice Altenburger, Judi Rogers,  
Pastor Michael Ryan, Pastor Tim Dawes  
[View the most up-to-date list at:  
swpasynod.org/prayer](https://swpasynod.org/prayer)

# SYNOD STAFF PRESENCE | JAN-MAR '23

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:**

Around the River Parish  
Berkeley Hills, North Hills  
Christ UMC, Bethel Park  
Christ, Duquesne  
Christ, Millvale  
Christ's, Murrysville  
Emmanuel Heilman, Ford City  
Emmanuel, Etna  
Evangelical, Worthington  
Faith, Natrona Heights  
Good Shepherd, Bower Hill  
Good Shepherd, New Castle  
Harrold Zion, Greensburg  
Holy Angels, Wilmerding  
Holy Trinity, Beaver

Hope, Brighton Township  
Hope, Cranberry  
Our Redeemer, McMurray  
Perry Highway, Wexford  
Prince of Peace, Pleasant Hills  
St. Andrew, Shadyside  
St. John Mark, Homestead  
St. John of Highland, McCandless  
St. Paul, Zelienople  
Stewart Avenue, Carrick  
Trinity, Avalon  
Trinity, Butler  
Trinity, Freeport  
Trinity, Wexford  
Zion, Harmony

*May*



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# Calendar of Causes

## SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIAL MINISTRY PARTNERS

*June*



### SEMINARIAN DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT FUND

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

*July*



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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# Wayfarer

Issue No. 14 STORIES FROM THE ROAD



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

## CHURCH “GRANDPARENTS”



**Lauren Wolcott**

*Communications Director*

[lauren.wolcott@swpasynod.org](mailto:lauren.wolcott@swpasynod.org) | 412-367-8222

One of the unsung joys of growing up in the church is the totally commonplace, yet surprisingly serendipitous, bond that develops between a kiddo and a special adult in the community. These cross-generational best friendships can last lifetimes, and start simply from sharing the same space and caring about the person in the pew behind you. Here are just a few stories of the many in our synod.

“When my daughter was a baby, I sang in our church choir and would need to sit in the choir pews on the altar. Our pastor’s wife would hold Sam during the service and inevitably she would fall asleep in Carol’s arms, every Sunday! Sam and Carol are close to this day. She would call her “Mama Carol.” It was a blessing to have someone to help and allow mom a brief moment to be able to be in the choir.”

**Anna Williams, Bethany, Dormont**

Mike and Juanita Pardus were the church grandparents of Harrold Zion. I was blessed to find my habitual seat in church right behind this lovely couple. Mike and Juanita now both walk with Jesus in glory in the land triumphant. Their spirits live on through the many people who were blessed to know them.

**Christine Weller, Harrold Zion, Greensburg**

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 13...**