

The LUTHERAN Letter

TO INFORM, INSPIRE AND ILLUMINATE

Digital

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Submitted photo

First Lutheran member George Fattman at home behind the organ.

George Fattman has (nearly) done it all in Johnstown

By RICK KAZMER

The Lutheran Letter Editor

There are likely not

many tasks at Johnstown's First Lutheran Church that George Fattman hasn't completed.

(See GEORGE 1, Page 5)

ELCA Bishop Makes Statement on New Pope Election

Dear church,

We of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America join with people around the world in praying for the ministry of Pope Leo XIV.

We rejoice with the people of the Roman Catholic Church, especially those in our communities, as they joyfully receive their new shepherd.

(See POPE, Page 7)



ELCA Presiding
Bishop
Elizabeth Eaton



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



An update from the
Louders, Page 14

The LUTHERAN Letter

TO INFORM, INSPIRE AND ILLUMINATE

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Please contact the editorial team (above) with your comments and story ideas. We look forward to hearing from you.

OUR MISSION

Inviting people to love one another.

OUR VISION

All creation living in harmony with Christ.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Articles for the Letter should be about 300 words or less and include applicable website or contact information.

Images should be as high resolution as possible, ideally 300 ppi at 3x5 inches (900x1500 pixels.)

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Allegheny Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Electing a Bishop

Sisters and Brothers of the Allegheny Synod, I'm wondering if you are feeling a wave of transition flowing through our territory. Transition – the process or period of change from one state or condition to another.



**Interim Bishop
Barbara J. Collins**

Whenever there is an upcoming election to call a new Bishop to serve a synod, there is an expected process of preparation for such an election.

This process of transitioning from one bishop to the next has been underway for the past nine months, thanks to the work of the synod's transition team.

But, this time our transitioning process is a bit different due to the request that our synod assembly, and therefore the election of a new bishop, be pushed back to the fall of 2025 so that we can better prepare ourselves.

Allow me to be straightforward about this decision to change the date of the assembly. When I first arrived, there was a sense of uncertainty, a rift in relationships, and a clearly expressed message that "we're not ready to elect a new bishop."

And so, we started to work through those feelings and struggles, and in my opinion, have made positive strides.

The conversations started in our synod council meetings, moved to engage similar conversations with our rostered leaders, and, most recently, gathered folks from every conference to hear each others' stories, to share information, and to talk about the future needs of this synod as we prepare to elect a new bishop to serve the Allegheny Synod.

(See BISHOP 1, Page 20)



Photo by Interim Bishop Barbar J. Collins

Scene of the Edition

The impressive spire at Zion Lutheran in Petersburg.

ASSEMBLY UPDATES

The Allegheny Synod Assembly will be held Oct. 31-Nov. 1 at the Blair County Convention Center. A new bishop will be elected in addition to other typical synod business and fellowship that happens during the event. More information is being mailed and updated on the synod website. Congregations will be emailed with news as well. The deadline to register is Sept. 15.

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Remember in Prayer

Join the Allegheny Synod in prayer for these congregations this issue.

NOVEMBER

Week 1:

**Zion Lutheran,
Meyersdale**

Week 2:

**Evangelical
Lutheran,
Duncansville**

Week 3:

**Trinity Lutheran,
Somerset**

Week 4:

**St. Mark
Lutheran,
Snydertown**

DECEMBER

Week 1:

**First Lutheran,
Johnstown**

Week 2:

**St. Matthew
Lutheran,
Martinsburg**

Week 3:

**St. Paul
Lutheran, Pine
Grove Mills**

Week 4:

**Moxham
Lutheran,
Johnstown**

Recital Series Expands

By THE LUTHERAN LETTER

First Lutheran Church, Johnstown, has expanded its Tuesday Noon Recital Series to serve residents of personal care homes in Cambria and Somerset counties. This was enabled by a grant from the 1889 Foundation, which originally was part of Conemaugh Memorial Medical Center.

“This is a way of using the arts to improve the health of a vulnerable part of our population,” George Fattman, chair of the Tuesday Noon Recital Task Force, said. “Although the homes know the value of music to the wellbeing of their residents, they have tight budgets to provide it.”

The recital series was created about 35 years ago when Kim Rauch was director of music and education at First Lutheran. Rauch recently returned to the church staff and has become associate chair of the TNR Task Force. The task force presents 12 recitals a year, in April, July, and October. Each recital is followed by a light lunch. There is no charge, thanks to contributions by 75 individuals, Thrivent Financial, and the 1889 Foundation. Residents of senior centers can benefit in two ways.

1. They can be transported to the recitals and lunches at First Lutheran. For example, about 15 residents of Heritage Ridge, formerly the Lutheran Home, regularly attend the programs. They get free rides from the Cambria County Transit Authority. All other costs are paid by the task force.

2. Several other homes schedule repeat performances of the noon recitals at their facilities. The artists receive double the honorarium.

For example, Laurel View Village, near Davidsville, requested that Nicholas Carroll, of Somerset, repeat his July piano recital at its facility.

Also scheduled for July are the Swigel Mountain Brass Quintet and the Pazzynski Family, a popular performance by relatives of Tyna Kaltenbaugh, widow of Pastor Robert Kaltenbaugh. They perform in Pittsburgh and Johnstown.

Mallory Bean, administrator of Somerset Senior Living, welcomes the outreach.

“It most certainly will help enrich the lives of so many,” she said. †

See photos from recitals on Page 6

**KEY
QUOTE**

“Hard work, attention to detail, and getting along with other volunteers are the keys.”

– George Fattman

GEORGE 1

(Continued from Page 1)

Since joining the congregation after graduating from Juniata College in 1958, Fattman has been a teacher, substitute organist, bell choir director, tower chime player, council president, chair of stewardship and special fund drives, publicity chair, website manager, writer of grant applications, bathroom cleaner, chair of the Tuesday Noon Recital Task Force, adviser to the intern vicar, and a member of the synod pastoral candidacy committee.

It's enough to fill a resume with jobs dedicated to God's work. But one of the roles stands out to Fattman.

The church along Vine Street has an impressive instrument, a 3,000-pipe Skinner organ.

“Playing the ... organ for a service or recital is awesome,” Fattman, 88, said. “I have limited musical talent and so have to work hard, but being engulfed in the sound and the technology of producing it can be overwhelming.”

Leveraging music to enrich the community has been a successful effort at First Lutheran with the Tuesday Noon Recital program. The events feature a light lunch and outstanding musical performances. The task force is finding new ways to include more people in the programs.

The key to the success?

“Hard work, attention to detail, and getting along with other volunteers are the keys. Creative people – the performers – are sensitive and respond to someone they feel they can trust. As with anything I undertake, prayer leads to insight and thus to success,” Fattman said.

The dedication is something that will be needed to overcome challenges every congregation is facing: declining membership, shrinking budgets, and less ministry. At First Lutheran, the operating budget has shrunk from three-quarters of a million dollars to less than \$200,000. But Fattman sees some signs of growth in Johnstown, led by volunteers.

“I think about this every time I see children bouncing up and down the aisles,” he said.

Fattman had a long journalism career, as editor of the Tribune-Democrat and as a news director at WJAC-TV, in addition to leading Laurel Arts in Somerset.

He and his wife, Anne, have an interesting, multicultural family, he said.

It includes, through marriage, “three races and a Christian whose heritage is Jewish. I could brag about all of them for a long time,” he said.

(See GEORGE 2, Page 8)



Submitted photos

MORE MUSIC



Above, the Villa Assisted Living at Napoleon Place in Johnstown rescheduled a performance after residents enjoyed one at First Lutheran. At left, a crowd enjoys lunch during one of the popular Noon Recitals.


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On May 8, we witnessed the historic election of the first Augustinian and the first U.S.-born pope – only the second to come from the Americas.

– Writes Presiding ELCA Bishop Eaton



POPE



(Continued from Page 1)

On May 8, we witnessed the historic election of the first Augustinian and the first U.S.-born pope – only the second to come from the Americas. Thus we share with him both context and theological roots (Martin Luther was also an Augustinian). We pray that this will provide us, as Catholics and as Lutherans, with an opportunity to strengthen our visible unity in Christ through dialogue and cooperation for the life of the world.

In his first appearance on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica, the new pope extended the blessing of Pope Francis, saying: "God loves us, all of us, evil will not prevail. We are all in the hands of God. Without fear, united, hand in hand with God and among ourselves, we will go forward. We are disciples of Christ, Christ goes before us, and the world needs His light. Humanity needs Him like a bridge to reach God and His love. You help us to build bridges with dialogue and encounter so we can all be one people always in peace."

We pray that the Holy Spirit will sustain Pope Leo XIV for the ministry to which he has been called, and will strengthen us all in our vocations as bridge-builders and as witnesses to God's love for all people and creation.

In Christ,

Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America †

What to Know About the Churchwide Assembly

By THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN AMERICA

The 2025 ELCA Churchwide Assembly will be held July 28–Aug. 2, 2025, at the Phoenix Convention Center in Phoenix, Arizona.

The assembly, the primary decision-making body of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, is a process of communal spiritual discernment. When the assembly convenes, its voting members meet with confidence in God's grace around word and water, wine and bread, to carry on their work on behalf of the entire church. Over the course of the assembly, voting members:

Hear reports and review the work of churchwide officers, leaders and units.
Receive and consider proposals from synod assemblies.

(See CHURCHWIDE Page 10)

GEORGE 2

WE ARE LUTHERAN

(Continued from Page 5)

THE LUTHERAN LETTER: What has been the most rewarding experience from your work at the church?

GEORGE FATTMAN: It's wonderful to feel accepted and to sense a kinship with people, especially with people from different backgrounds. The FLC congregation is much more diverse than outsiders imagine.

LL: What have you learned?

GF: Because God loves us and Christ died for us and the Holy Spirit advocates for us, we don't have to bog down in worry about worthiness or ability. No, I am not worthy – but I've learned to just keep moving along and doing the best I can, working with whoever happens to become part of the ministry. God uses unlikely people in unexpected ways. We are stronger when we work together. Some of the finest people I know are members of First Lutheran Church. †

Church Growth in the Green Season

By **SUE ELLEN SPOTTS**

Director of Evangelical Mission

We're officially in the "season of the church."

The altar guild won't have to change out the paraments for quite a while. We'll be seeing green until November. It is the season where we focus on how the Spirit uses us to spread the love, hope, and grace of Christ in the world. We focus on how the Church of Christ is vital and growing.

I want to share a story from Michael Adam Beck.

Beck is a United Methodist pastor and leads the Fresh Expressions movement of the UMC. Fresh Expressions are a form of church primarily for the benefit of those who are not yet part of the church.

"Our team had just completed a year of planting two new Fresh Expressions, guiding people with no prior connection to church through spiritual journeys, and helping a declining rural congregation form community partnerships and launch an anti-racism initiative.

"I was exhausted – but also strangely hopeful. I had witnessed real transformation: people who hadn't darkened the door of a church in decades (or ever) gathering to worship Jesus in a burrito shop and a tattoo parlor.

"Then the evaluation began. The committee chair glanced at the form. 'Our worship attendance has only in-



Sue Ellen Spotts,
Director of
Evangelical
Mission

creased by five people. Giving is flat ... not growing.' They slid the paper across the table ...

"'Pastor,' she said, lowering her voice, 'I'm just not sure all these side projects are really helping us grow ... we've got people meeting at the tattoo parlor, you're doing something at a dog park on Saturdays, and you keep talking about that burrito Bible study. But our Sunday attendance hasn't really changed, and our giving isn't enough. I'm just wondering – when are we going to focus on making the church vital again?'"

I took a deep breath. I wanted to tell her about the young woman at dog park church who found her way back to God after years of addiction. I wanted to explain how the man with fresh ink had found community in the parlor, a space where he could finally talk honestly about his suicidal thoughts. I wanted to lift up the quiet but unmistakable stories of transformation unfolding in these unconventional places ... And that's when it hit me: We were using the same word – vitality – but we meant completely different things."

That excerpt was from "Making Love Count: Reclaiming Stories That Don't Fit the Spreadsheet."

(See **GROWTH** Page 24)

CHURCHWIDE

(Continued from Page 8)

- Elect officers, board members and other leaders as specified by the constitution or bylaws.
- Establish ELCA churchwide policy.
- Worship together.
- Adopt a budget.
- Conduct other business related to the ELCA churchwide organization.

For the Life of the World

The first Council of Nicaea was convened 1,700 years ago, beginning the process of setting forth Christian convictions in what we know today as the Nicene Creed.

The creed proclaims the life-giving truth of the triune God and our steadfast faith in Jesus Christ “for ... the life of the world to come.” These convictions continue to live and breathe among us in word and sacrament.

Early in her tenure, Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton set forth her own convictions to guide the members of the ELCA in understanding our unique identity, and these convictions have

become a recognized way of articulating who we are:

- We are church.
- We are Lutheran.
- We are church together.
- We are church for the sake of the world.

We are church for the sake of the world – for the abundant life promised by God and fulfilled in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for all creation.

We recognize the wisdom of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who said, “The church is the church only when it exists for others.”

Our constitution’s “Statement of Purpose” boldly proclaims this commitment to be a people “called and sent to bear witness to God’s creative, redeeming, and sanctifying activity in the world.”

Rooted in the ancient creeds, we are called to live boldly in service to a world longing for healing, justice and hope. We will continue to faithfully pursue God’s mission of reconciliation for the life of the world. †

**Click here for continuing
Churchwide Assembly updates**

Go Tell It Initiative Opportunities

By **PASTOR JOHN H. KRATZ**

Initiative Director

The Go Tell It IN the Mountains Initiative is active and has created the following opportunities.

Authorized Lay Worship Leader Fellowship meetings have been scheduled. Our April event was a great success with a lot of information from our ALWL's!

This fellowship will meet quarterly. Some of our topics to be covered are best stewardship options for local congregations, worship leadership training, the practical applications (praxis) of our Holy Communion theology, newest resources for preparing sermons, and even some "last-minute" sermon helps.

Bishop Collins, Pastor Shock, and Director Kratz will all be helping to lead us in these meetings. Also, future discussion ideas will come from the ALWL Fellowship itself.

ALWL Fellowship Details:

- Aug 3: St. Paul's Lutheran Mundys Corners 3-5 p.m. meeting. 5 p.m. meal.
- Oct. 26: St. Paul's Lutheran Mundys Corners 3-5 p.m. meeting. 5 p.m. meal.
- Jan. 25: Via Zoom. 3-5 p.m. meeting.
- April 26: St. Paul's Lutheran Mundys Corners 3-5 p.m. meeting. 5 p.m. meal.

The Pericope Study lead by Dr. Al-



**Pastor
John H. Kratz**

lison DeForest of United Seminary was a wonderful time of learning and fellowship.

One person shared that from this one meeting they were able to prepare their entire quarter of sermon ideas.

Dr. DeForest has graciously agreed to lead us through the Pericope texts every quarter for this year. We will meet every time at the Lutheran Home in Hollidaysburg. There will not be a Zoom option for these events. The cost for each event is \$20, which covers the meal and honoraria expenses. You may pay through the Sign-Up-Genius tool, bring checks payable to "Allegheny Synod," or cash the day of the event. Directional signs inside the building showing the way to the meeting space are being created. (this is the same space that was used in May).

Here is the agenda (note time change from the previous meeting: 8:30 a.m. Gathering; 9 a.m. Presentation by Dr. DeForest; noon lunch; 3 p.m. end.

The dates of the events are Aug. 20; Nov. 12; Feb. 11; and May 27.

A Sign-Up-Genius notice will be sent out in future synod communication, but [here is the sign-up link](#) for Aug. 20. †

Centre Safe and Allegheny Synod Congregations Partner on Sexual Assault Prevention for Older Population

By **JENNIFER PENCEK**

Executive Director, Centre Safe

Every 68 seconds an American is sexually assaulted. Let that sink in.

Sexual assault does not discriminate – victims and perpetrators include individuals of every age, demographic, and background, every socio-economic status, race, religion, and creed.

Centre Safe has spent the past 50 years working to support survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking, and eliminate violence in Centre County and beyond.

Recently, Centre Safe partnered with community organizations, including two Allegheny Synod congregations, to join forces in addressing sexual violence in the 60-plus community.

Thanks to a grant from the Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect, Centre Safe has

created a multi-year program called AWARE – Adult Wisdom to Advance Respect.

The AWARE program is a comprehensive sexual violence education initiative for the 60-plus population that focuses on the promotion of healthy social norms and the creation of protective environments for this specific age group.

Year 1 of the program aims to reach caregivers, staff, and volunteers of various organizations with year 2 reaching members of the 60-plus community, and year 3 reaching loved ones of older adults and community members.

Along with Foxdale Village Retirement Community in State College, two Allegheny Synod congregations – St. Mark Lutheran Church Snyderstown in Howard and Grace Lutheran Church in State College – helped launch the program as

hosts and will continue with the program throughout the grant period.

All initial host sites have finished the four initial sessions of the first year of the program and are in planning stages for year two.

“Within a couple weeks of finishing the AWARE training, a visitor revealed their relationship violence situation,” said Pastor Carolyn Hetrick, of Grace Lutheran.

“She was embarrassed and ashamed that in her late 60s she was experiencing this. These feelings kept her from seeking a safe space. One of our trainees met with her, encouraged and honored her desire for well-being, and supported significant life changes. Skills gained in AWARE gave the helper confidence and resources.”

Abuse against older adults is an acute problem.

(See AWARE, Page 13)

AWARE

(Continued from Page 12)

Fourteen percent of adults 70 and older reported experiencing some form of abuse in the past year, and 30% of victims of sexual abuse over age 65 report the abuse to police.

Mary Troup, a long-time member of St. Mark Lutheran Snydertown and a participant of AWARE, was shocked to hear statistics of sexual assault, especially as it connected to older adults.

“I was not aware of the percentage rates of sexual assaults within the senior population being so high prior to the workshop,” she said. “It made me rethink things, which happened to me in the past when I said nothing and did nothing because I felt I was the one who had caused these things to occur. It now makes me much more alert to situations when dealing with others, especially while having a parent in a care facility.”

Troup strongly encourages other congregations and organizations to host AWARE and/or take part in workshops. She said we must confront these issues instead of hiding from them.

“I would like people to know that these conversations on this topic must take place in order for the general population to not only be aware of it, but for action to be taken to deter any would-be perpetrators and to protect all victims,” she said.

Pastor David Pencek, of St. Mark, added that abuse is not always talk-

ed about, and when you add in the layer of the older age demographic, it is discussed even less.

“Being part of this program can definitely open eyes and educate people who are either age 60 or older or have someone they love who is age 60 or older – and that is just about everyone,” he said. “The people who took the program learned a great deal, and they were appreciative that St. Mark hosted it.”

For others wondering if their church is the “right” setting to host AWARE, Pencek said no matter who attends, just offering the workshops sends a message.

“Even if you don’t know how many people will show up, just the fact that you are hosting a program on this important and difficult issue may mean someone who sees that and who has been abused or assaulted knows they can come to you and see you as someone who cares about people in their situation,” he said.

For more information on AWARE, e-mail jpencek@centresafe.org, or call 814-238-7066. For more information on Centre Safe, sexual assault, and resources, visit www.centresafe.org or call the 24/7 hotline toll-free at 877-234-5050. †



Allegheny Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

ICYMI: SYNOD NEWS

Some news and photos from around the synod



Submitted photo

Interim Bishop Collins was at Easter worship at St. John, Millheim. The church has an impressive art display and sanctuary.

The Louder Family Legacy

(Editor's note: This story was posted by Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries on Facebook as part of its "Coming Together To Do Great Things" feature.)

ALSM is fortunate to have exceptional residents, families, and team members who make our community truly special.

As we open our arms to welcome new cottage residents at The Oaks, it feels especially meaningful to greet The Rev. Larry Louder and his wife, Linda – a couple whose connection to ALSM runs deeper than most.

(See LOUDER 1, Page 16)

Assisting One Another

Thoughts from the Assistant to the Bishop

By **PASTOR KEVIN SHOCK**

Assistant to the Bishop

When I was a little kid, I loved to watch old-school professional wrestling.

This was the era before pyrotechnics and studio-like production. They made it work with back stories, posturing, and theatrics in the square circle.

Some of my favorite matches were between tag teams. A tag team normally consisted of two wrestlers who, if things got difficult in the ring, could tag each other to switch positions in the match and give relief to the struggling teammate. I loved the suspense of weary wrestlers trying to reach their partners outside the ring, and I loved how quickly the momentum of the match could change.

Being part of a tag team seemed to me to be the best way to



Pastor Kevin Shock

wrestle. It's oftentimes also the best way to do good ministry.

I chuckled to myself recently when I realized I'm part of a championship ministry tag team. Pastor David Pencek serves the people at St. Mark in Snyderdowntown, Nittany Conference, and there are three active families there for which I have married the couples and Pastor David has baptized their children.

What a great way to share duties! This came about because I had twice served as vacancy pastor during pastoral transitions at

Snyderdowntown when I was the pastor at St. Mark in Pleasant Gap. One couple I married because of their connection to Pleasant Gap, but two couples had connections to Snyderdowntown during my time there.

Just about the time Pastor David was ordained and had begun serving at Snyderdowntown, one of the couples had the first baby of these families.

They reached out to me to see whether I would be willing to baptize their new daughter, as I was the pastor who they knew. They had not been active at Snyderdowntown, and I told them that, although I was willing, I thought it would be a good idea to contact the new pastor and have their child baptized into the community where they lived and had family connections.

(See SHOCK 1, Page 28)



Pastor Larry and
Linda Louder.

Submitted photo

LOUDER 1

(Continued from Page 14)

For years, Pastor Louder was often the one offering the warm welcomes. Now, in a touching role reversal, he and Linda are the newest faces in our cottage community.

Pastor Louder’s bond with ALSM began when, as a young boy, he would accompany his father to work for Dr. Luke Rhodes – the visionary who founded ALSM. Those early days left a lasting impression.

Young Larry spent countless hours at The Lutheran Home in Hollidaysburg, visiting, volunteering, and witnessing the deep compassion that would define ALSM’s legacy. Over time, the Louder family became woven into the fabric of ALSM. To date,

13 of Pastor Louder’s relatives – his grandmother, parents, aunts, uncles, and more – have called The Lutheran Home or The Oaks their home. Pastor Louder himself has served the organization in numerous roles, including director of development, director of pastoral care, and as a member of the board of trustees. When the Louders moved to Centre County for Pastor Louder’s call to Grace Lutheran Church in State College, the connection to ALSM remained strong. When his mother, affectionately known as Tuckey, needed more support, she moved from her cottage at The Lutheran Home to personal care at The Oaks to be closer to Larry and Linda.

(See LOUDER 2, Page 17)

“It’s really nice here. We feel safe, and it brings peace of mind knowing there’s staff available to help when needed.”

– Pastor Larry Louder

LOUDER 2

(Continued from Page 16)

Later, she returned to The Lutheran Home for skilled nursing care.

Pastor Louder remembers her gratitude clearly.

“She would say, ‘I’m good. I know I’m good and the reason for that is because I am here.’” He added, “I was happy she was there. She received quality care, and the staff treated her as if she was their own mother.”

Linda Louder has also given generously of her time and heart to ALSM. Whether volunteering at the Acorn Shop, attending programs, or simply offering a kind word to residents and staff, she has long been a cherished member of the community. Today, she visits The Lutheran Home often, where her twin sister resides.

“It’s a calling for those who work in long-term care,” Linda shared. “You can tell they love what they do. My sister doesn’t speak much, but she smiles – and I know she’s comfortable, content, and safe.”

Though their roots run deep in both Blair and Centre Counties, the Louders have made their home in State College for many years. But when the stairs in their condo began to feel like more of a challenge, they started thinking ahead.

“We’re in our mid-70s and realized it would only get harder to manage a house with multiple levels,” Linda said. “We attended an open house at The Oaks and knew a cottage would be the right move. We could keep the same doctors and church we love, all while living in a home better suited for our future.”

Pastor Louder agreed: “It’s really nice here. We feel safe, and it brings peace of mind knowing there’s staff available to help when needed. I don’t have to mow the lawn anymore, and if anything changes in our health, we know we have options for more care.”

The Louder family’s story is one of faith, family, and enduring commitment to a mission of care. From those early days walking alongside his father to a new season of life in a cozy cottage at The Oaks, Pastor Louder and Linda have brought grace, service, and joy to our community.

We are honored to welcome them home. †



Patient Sowing

Waiting can be the Hardest Part When Spreading God's Word

By **PASTOR MARTY JO IRVIN-STELLABOTTE**

Geeseytown-Newry Lutheran Parish

What does sharing God's love with others look like to you?

For Jesus, it looked like scattering seed in many different places and many types of soil and patiently watching and waiting for it grow.

In the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13:1-9), Jesus taught his disciples that it takes very little seed – but when it's blessed by God, miracles can occur.

In the parable, Jesus tells of a farmer who scatters seed in different types of soil and in a variety of conditions. This farmer seems to have an abundance of seed that he is just throw-

ing around everywhere, and not worrying about what type of soil it lands upon.

And that's what it's often like when we are talking to someone about our faith: the Holy Spirit equips us to share Jesus' love with others, and we can hardly wait for them to become involved with the church.

But that can be difficult in our instant-gratification society, where we're used to watching news as it happens and having packages from around the world delivered to our door in two days.

We can be impatient: when we plant seed, we want it to grow now.

(See **SOWING 1**, Page 19)

SOWING 1

(Continued from Page 18)

We want the fruits of our labor to happen now.

We often don't want to wait and spend the extra time and care that it takes to nurture and fertilize the seeds as they slowly grow and flourish – whether we're talking literally about our gardens and flowers that we plant, or when we're sharing the love of Christ with someone.

We might talk to someone about Jesus or invite them to church, but that person might take weeks or months – or even years – until they finally open their Bible or attend a worship service.

Is that our fault? Should we get frustrated that it took them so long? No, because we planted the seed, and God has a different time frame than ours. Maybe Sunday is the only day they don't work.

Maybe they've had a negative experience with church in the past and they're hesitant about giving it another

try.

Maybe they grew up in a household where faith wasn't part of what they did, so they might be scared that they don't know the "right" way to worship or are afraid of asking the "wrong" questions.

Whatever the case, Jesus seems to be telling us in this parable that all seeds bear fruit.

Some may bear fruit right away ... while some seeds may be scattered and not bear fruit until much later.

(See **SOWING 2**, Page 20)

Come enjoy fun, food, and fellowship at **Lutheran Day** at the **Altoona Curve**



Sunday, August 24

Buffet begins at 5pm

Game begins at 6 pm

Please order your tickets by Sunday, August 10; email alleghenysynodcurvetickets@gmail.com or call/text 814.934.9941. Please mail payments to the Allegheny Synod Office, 916 Hickory St., Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

Tickets - \$15/each

Price includes all-you-can-eat buffet one hour before the game at the first base picnic area at PNG Field and a Terrace level (200-level) game ticket. *If you are unable to join us for the buffet and wish to attend the game ONLY, individual tickets are \$11/each.*

Please note: Children 2 and under are free.

Join us as the Altoona Curve celebrates faith of all kinds with a night full of unity, fellowship, and community spirit during Faith Night. Fireworks following the game! Kids 14 and under run the bases!

The Transition Team Wants Your Input

What is your hope for the synod?

Please submit your response to this question to SynodTransitionTeam@gmail.com by Aug. 15 and limit it to 1,000 characters or less. If you know someone who isn't online to do this themselves, have a conversation with them, record their answer, and then submit it online for them.

BISHOP 1

(Continued from Page 2)

We now know one another a little better and now have a wonderfully long list of what you are hoping for in relation to the service and personhood of the next bishop.

The work of the Transition Team now brings to you our discerned and condensed list from that wonderfully long list from the voices of the synod.

We, the people of the Allegheny Synod, pray for a bishop who is a faithful servant of Christ, grounded in a Lutheran identity, feels called to lead others in God's mission, and brings:

- Knowledge of and commitment to the people, congregations, and ministries of the Allegheny Synod;
- Strong and developed leadership skills that inspires vision, encourages teamwork, and can effectively administer the responsibilities of the Office of the Bishop;
- Interpersonal skills that model caring, warmth, acceptance, and joy in ministry;
- A loving, positive, and even-tempered presence in person and through all means of communication;
- A gift, and desire, to build relationships across the entire synod territory and offers support and encouragement for others to do the same.

(See BISHOP 2, Page 21)

SOWING 2

(Continued from Page 18)

And so, like that farmer, we should just keep scattering seed around everywhere – seeds of hope, forgiveness, acceptance, and love for all God's people. Then we sit back and let the Holy Spirit do the work, without getting impatient or worrying about whether the seed bears more or less fruit because of something we did.

As Jesus' disciples, we are called to just keep throwing seed out there abundantly, because God's grace is not a one-and-done thing; it's not something that you have one chance and you either get it and bear fruit or you fail forever. God always waits for us with open arms, just waiting to show us love and forgiveness. †

BISHOP 2

(Continued from Page 20)

This merging of comments from everyone is just one task on which the transition team has been working. Let's look at the other tasks that they've taken on.

From the concerned statement that "we don't know our rostered leaders," the team has requested information from all of our synod's rostered leaders so that we can create a new, online directory of those who serve in this synod. This is still in the works, with the hope of having an updated directory available on our website by the end of the summer.

Along with a directory to help us get to know one another better and, as part of the typical transitioning process, the team is also working on preparing a mini-ministry site profile of the synod that offers a quick description of who we are. That will also be made available on the synod's website.

A new step in the election process that the team will oversee is inviting members from across the synod to raise up the names of those who they believe have the potential to serve as bishop.

This is called a Pre-Identification Process that allows potential candidates to provide a little more information about themselves and answer specific questions related to the ministry of the synod.

Three quick facts about this process: First – candidates who are raised up have the choice to provide additional information about themselves or not. Second – rostered leaders from across the ELCA, who are in good standing, are eligible to have their name raised up. Third – candidates

who are raised up are not automatically on the ecclesiastical ballot on the first day of synod assembly. This is simply a way to become more knowledgeable about potential candidates before that first day of synod assembly. If you wish to raise up the name of someone, please email that person's name to: SynodTransitionTeam@gmail.com before Aug. 15.

Finally, the Transition Team has one more question to ask, and we want to hear from you:

What is your hope for the synod?

Please submit your response to this question to SynodTransitionTeam@gmail.com by Aug. 15 and limit it to 1,000 characters or less. If you know someone who isn't online to do this themselves, have a conversation with them, record their answer and then submit it online for them.

Transitioning, change, is part of life. But walking through it together, talking through it together, reaps more benefits than we realize.

Thank you for taking part in this process, for sharing your thoughts and your hopes, so that together we are more prepared to elect the next bishop of the Allegheny Synod of the ELCA.

Shalom,
Bishop Collins ...

... and your Transition Team: Ann Ferry (chair), Michele Peese (recorder), Pastor Scott Custead, Spence Garvin, Pastor Tyler Graham, Vicar Christy Harford, Betsy Kreger, Pastor MJ Irvin-Stellabotte, Pastor Ron Miller †



Scenes from last year's Lutheran Day at the Curve, featuring food, fellowship, and fireworks.

Submitted photos

Annual Synod Curve Outing is Near

By **PASTOR MARTY JO IRVIN-STELLABOTTE**

Geeseytown-Newry Lutheran Parish

Lutheran Day at the Curve has become a long-standing tradition for the Allegheny Synod. It's a great way to reconnect with friends from throughout the synod that we might not get to see very often, and make new ones, too.

Rose and David Harford, members of Benscreek Lutheran Church, said they love attending the event each year.

"It is a fun time to be among friends and enjoy a Curve baseball game," Rose said. David agrees, noting that he loves baseball "and the PNG Field is an awesome place for a ballgame and a great time with friends."

Last year's event drew more than 80 people from around the synod, and this year promises to be even bigger as we will be gathering for an all-you-can-eat picnic in the First Base Picnic Area on the main concourse an hour before the game begins.

The buffet menu includes hot dogs,

hamburgers, potato chips, cookies, soda, and water.

Tickets to the event are only \$15 each, which includes the buffet and a game ticket on the Terrace (second) level.

"Lutheran Day at the Curve has always been a real great time to see and meet other Lutherans from around our synod. It's an enjoyable evening of nice fellowship, good food, and a great atmosphere while cheering on the Altoona Curve," Terry Koch, member of Bethany Lutheran Church, Altoona, and member of Synod Council, said.

For anyone who wants to attend Lutheran Day at the Curve, but is unable to be at the buffet, individual game tickets are \$11 each; children 2 and under are free.

For more information or to reserve tickets, please email alleghenysynod-curveickets@gmail.com or text your order and name to 814-934-9941. We look forward to seeing you at the ballpark. †

Who's Who at Camp Sequanota?

By **HANNA WEIMER**
Camp Sequanota

This summer, Neelum and NatZ will be our program directors at Sequanota. Let's get to know them!

Q: Tell me about yourself.

Neelum: I am an ocean artist and design instructor from Karachi, Pakistan. I have spent the past decade working for various organizations around the world and these have all been creative and entrepreneurial programs for children and youth. At my Soulside Studio, back at home, I create and sell realistic ocean art and water sculptures. I also train and teach Brazilian Jujitsu during the week and spend most of my weekends decorating my house, gardening, cooking, and taking care of my friends, family, 101 plants, and cats.

NatZ: I'm NatZ, I'm 28 years old, and I'm from

Bogota, Colombia. I'm an English Philologist and I've been an English teacher for more than five years. Currently, I'm the Immersion Camp Coordinator at the YMCA Colombia, in charge of planning schedules, training staff, and leading programs on site. I love anything that has to do with yarn; crochet, punch needle, rug making, macrame, etc. I also love to sing, I cook anytime I get the chance, and of course, I have a special love for camp!

Q: How did you get to Camp Sequanota?

Neelum: I found out about summer camps in the USA hiring international staff through some friends in Karachi. And so with the help of a sponsoring agency called IENA, I started applying to different camps on their individual websites. Camp Sequanota was interestingly recommended by someone

in Pakistan through an online summer camp group on Facebook. When I saw their website and looked at the reviews on Google, I immediately felt like this was a place that simply aligned with what I have been trying to achieve in life; to work with good people trying to make the world a better place. After a bunch of formalities and lots of support from Pastor Nathan, Hanna, and Angie, I finally got to fly here last summer and of course again this year.

NatZ: I learned about the Y Colombia's International Camp Counselor Program in 2019 when I did my internship with them, and was planning to apply when COVID hit. I decided to finish Uni and in 2022 I applied and traveled to a camp in Washington State, and it was the best experience and the reason why camp became my dream job.

(See CAMP 1, Page 26)



LUTHERAN CAMPUS MINISTRY IS IN THE WORK OF SOWING AND TENDING SEEDS.
THERE IS NO WAY TO PREDICT WHEN OR WHERE THOSE SEEDS WILL EVENTUALLY BEAR FRUIT,
BUT WE KNOW THAT THROUGH GOD, THE HARVEST WILL BE BOUNTIFUL.

You can Help Tell the Story of Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State

By **DEACON ALICIA ANDERSON**

Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State

This summer, while campus is relatively quiet and students are busy with summer jobs, online courses, internships, travel, and time with families, Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State is inviting you and your congregation to make plans to help LCM.

Help us tell your members and others about the important ways campus ministry cares for and supports young adults. LCM is with students through the many changes and challenges in their college years. Lutheran Campus Ministry provides a safe place to ask difficult questions and grow in faith.

(See CAMPUS, Page 25)

GROWTH

(Continued from Page 9)

What are the measures you are using for vitality in your congregation?

How are you taking the grace of God into your community in new ways, to reach people who need to experience it? Using some of the metrics identified by Beck, I'd like to suggest that, when you discuss the vitality of your congregation, you try doing the following:

Tell stories, not just stats – where have you been sharing Christ's love in the world?

Track spiritual growth, not just attendance – how are the members of your congregation growing in their faith; how are you studying and praying together?

Focus on community engagement – cultivate relationships in your ministries instead of counting heads.

Practice experimental faithfulness – celebrate trying new ways of reaching out, not just what succeeds.

Consider that we do not know the number of people Jesus reached in his ministry. What we know are the stories of how people were healed, their lives transformed. I challenge you to start your meetings and other gatherings in this season with stories of where you and others are experiencing the love of Christ. Use that collection of stories to measure how the church is growing in your community. †



Some of the students involved with Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State.

Submitted photos

CAMPUS

(Continued from Page 24)

LCM offers a caring Christian community, plus relevant resources to help students live their beliefs in everyday life.

We've created materials for you to share as bulletin inserts or announcements, newsletter articles, or email updates. You are welcome to use them "as is" or cut and paste the information into your own format. Share these resources this summer or (even better) in August and September as the academic year is beginning and people are thinking about school and life on campus.

You'll find the following resources to help tell the story of Lutheran Campus Ministry:

Photo Flier: Smiling student faces and suggestions of how contributions help.

LCM Program Flier: Description of the types of programs offered and how they matter for students.

Imagine Flier: Explanation of the impact campus ministry has today and into the future.

Voices Flier: Quotes from recent alumni about how LCM makes a difference for students.

QR Code: Invitation to support LCM online or via post with link and postal address. Use this QR Code or the links for each flier. If you'd like to receive these materials via email, contact lutheran@psu.edu, and we can send them directly.

Help support Lutheran Campus Ministry by telling the LCM story in your congregation.

Lutheran Campus Ministry is in the work of tending seeds. There is no way to predict when or where those seeds will eventually bear fruit, but we know that through God, the harvest will be bountiful. †

CAMP 1

(Continued from Page 23)

I decided to apply through the Y this year once more, hoping to get a leadership position offer given my job at the Y Colombia, and thought it would be a great opportunity to improve my processes and bring fresh ideas both to a camp in the U.S. and to my job. I got an offer from Pastor Nathan, and after our first online meeting I knew Sequanota was exactly what I was looking for.

Q: What is your favorite part about summer camp?

Neelum: I feel immense satisfaction and joy when I am working with young people and so here at camp I genuinely get to engage and help create exciting experiences and opportunities for them. Just watching them grow over a period of a few weeks, make friends, sing together, laugh together, endless hugs, and high-fives, it is incredibly rewarding and I am so grateful to experience this with such a big community. Other things I love about Sequanota include the serene landscapes, the hills, the trees, the creeks, the beautiful moss, the crafts, cabin, campfires, the “from moo to you” milk trucks, eating together and the fireflies when you’re walking up the hill.

NatZ: There’s a lot of things I love about being at camp, but being able to see how these incredible friendships between campers and staff are formed is definitely up there. Being able to see people grow so much in such a short

span of time is an amazing thing and I love to witness it and be part of it. I still keep a couple of close friends from my previous camp, and I hope to keep some from Sequanota, too.

Q: What is one professional goal for this summer? What is one personal goal for this summer?

Neelum: I would say that I am really enjoying the leading opportunities I have been given this summer, and so my goal is to be a good leader and role model while also being a great team player. Personally this year, I have been trying to accept and understand that we truly live in time so I am trying to build lasting relationships with my family at camp while helping others do the same and also appreciating everyday experiences and moments no matter how small or big.

NatZ: I came with the expectation of learning how camp works in Sequanota, and taking as many tools and resources as possible back to my programs in Bogota, while bringing some new and fresh ideas from home. Coordinating as a team is also new for me; I’m used to doing most of it on my own, so knowing how to divide up work and trust the team is also something I want to work on. Personally, I just want to enjoy these three months, summer goes by really fast and I just want to live every moment as if I was about to leave, take pictures, record stuff, laugh with everyone, and be myself.

(See CAMP 2, Page 27)

Heaven on Earth?

“The landscapes are breathtaking, everything is so brightly green that sometimes I doubt it’s real!”

– Camp Sequanota Counselor NatZ on the Somerset County landscape.
NatZ is from an urban area in Bogota, Colombia.

CAMP 2

(Continued from Page 26)

Q: What is the biggest surprise or difference you have faced being away from living in an urban setting in a different country?

Neelum: I come from a heavily populated city, but I have actually lived in a more suburban part of that city, so I did feel immediately comfortable in wild-life and nature. However, my biggest and most pleasant surprise would be how everyone knows everyone else here, how you actually stop and meet and talk to people while you are on the road or at the supermarket. I also feel very inspired by how everyone works really hard and spends a lot of time outdoors. When you look around you see these incredibly beautiful fields and skies and it almost always feels like a dream. It is very difficult to be in a bad mood here in this setting while you will see that everyone is almost always cranky in dense cities like where I am from.

NatZ: One of the big things is how united and loving this community is, and how welcomed I felt since the very first moment. I come from a city where you keep to yourself, and people on the streets are doing their own thing, too busy to mind others. Here, everywhere you go someone says “hi” to you, they know the staff, know the returning cabin guides, everyone greets you as if you were family. It’s such a close-knit community, and I feel very happy to be part of it now. Also, the landscapes are breathtaking, everything is so brightly green that sometimes I doubt it’s real! †



On Pentecost Sunday, Pastor Shock presided at Confirmation at St. Paul's in Mundy's Corner. Pictured are Shock, Vicar Jen Bobolsky Sherbine, and the six confirmands.

Submitted photo

SHOCK 1

(Continued from Page 15)

That pastoral act led to their becoming more active in the congregation at Snyderstown, which has been a blessing both to them and to the congregation. Since that first baptism there have been three more. Three marriages; four baptisms; tag team champions!

Sometimes there is a tendency to want to claim ministry for ourselves. If a new person comes into our congregation, we want to baptize, confirm, marry them, so they become a member at our church and support our ministry. In those situations it can be a more faithful kind of ministry to help a stranger find the ministry that best suits them

and accompany them toward that ministry.

During my time in Pleasant Gap, a man named Jim visited one Sunday morning, then another, then another. Jim stuck around after worship for fellowship; he came to Bible study; he put money in the offering plate. As I got to know Jim, however, I learned he would never be the model member I wanted him to be. He was, at the time, living in a house he owned nearby. He had been in an accident that left him temporarily unable to drive, and this house was closer to public transportation routes.

(See SHOCK 2, Page 29)

The First Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the **CORINTHIANS**

Greeting

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

“I planted, Apollos watered, but God made it grow ... The one who plants and the one who waters work together ... We are God’s coworkers, and you are God’s field, God’s building.”

– Paul wrote (1 Cor. 3:6-9)

SHOCK 2

(Continued from Page 28)

As he recovered, the plan was to move back into State College and back into the Roman Catholic parish where he was going through the process to join. I was certainly disappointed that Jim wouldn’t be more permanent among us, but I made it clear to him that we were simply glad to be a part of his faith journey and that he was always welcome among us.

I would later run into Jim at the State College YMCA, and we still had engaging conversations.

I give thanks that we could minister to him along the way.

Paul writes to the church in Corinth: “I planted, Apollos watered, but God made it grow ... The one who plants and the one who waters work together ... We are God’s coworkers, and you are God’s field, God’s building.” (See 1 Cor. 3:6-9). I could have tried to convince Jim to stay. I could have gone wild trying to baptize all those babies and have their families join “my” church.

Instead, I married, Pastor David baptized, and God made it grow. When we see one another in the church as God’s coworkers, as part of a ministry tag team, and when we see the world beyond our walls as God’s field, then God brings the growth that we can’t by ourselves. May it be so in our ministry together. †

BEFORE YOU GO

A Summer at 15 Months

My daughter, Nora, who turned 15 months on July 1, is really starting to notice the world around her.

Recently, Courtney took her outside to play in a small pool during the extreme heat we had in late June. She splashed, laughed, and kept reaching for the grass.

This year, more than in prior ones, we have had ticks in our yard, which is located in the middle of town. Each night we give her a solid examination for the tiny nuisances. I recently had to go to the ER with one on my back.

Nora is in a world where there are hidden pitfalls among all the flowers. What looks bright and beautiful may have something harmful nearby.

That's why a relationship with Jesus is so important. He is the guiding light amid so much uncertainty.

And while the world is full of ticks, it also has plenty of wonderful gifts from God to enjoy.

Nora is still at the stage where everything seems innocent. It's awesome to watch her experience all these things – even splashing outside in the water – for the first time.

With sunscreen and tick spray, of course.

See you in the fall,

– Rick Kazmer



Nora Belle, in the pool.