The Lutheran Letter
TO INFORM, INSPIRE AND ILLUMINATE
Digital



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ART ON THE WATER



Joe Marvich, Altoona, is an avid fly fisherman

Submitted photo

Read the Full Story on Page 4

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

The LUTHERAN Letter
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Bishop Kevin Shock
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Phone: 814-942-1042 • Fax: 814-941-9259
www.AlleghenySynod.org •
email: Office@AlleghenySynod.com

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EDITORIAL STAFF
Editor Rick Kazmer
Copy Editor Courtney Kazmer
Email: r9remzak@hotmail.com
Note: The Office of the Bishop reserves the right to revise, cancel or reject any advertisement or editorial information.

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OUR MISSION
Inviting people to love one another.

OUR VISION
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CONTACT SYNOD STAFF
Office Manager Michelle Bossler: Michelle.Bossler@AlleghenySynod.com
Bishop Kevin Shock: kevin.shock@alleghenysynod.com
Director for Evangelical Mission, Deacon Sue Ellen Spotts: SueEllen.Spotts@elca.org
Assistants to the Bishop: Pastors Marty Jo Irvin-Stellabotte: pastormartyjo@gmail.com; Tyler Graham: rev-tgraham@outlook.com; Traci Marriott: revtracimarriott@gmail.com; Deacon Alicia Anderson: ara2psu@gmail.com
Go Tell It Initiative Director John Kratz: director@alleghenysynod.com

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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

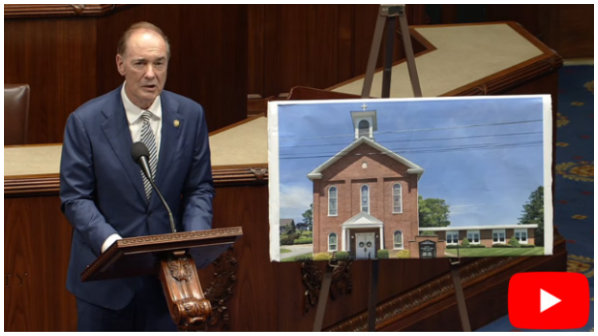

Photo from U.S. Rep. John Joyce's office

U.S. Rep. John Joyce noted Newry's milestone during remarks on the House Floor. More photos on the next page.

Newry Celebrates 225

Church Recognized in Washington, D.C.

By THE LUTHERAN LETTER

Newry Lutheran Church in Blair County was recognized on the House floor in Washington, D.C.

The congregation is celebrating 225 years of ministry, and U.S. Rep. John Joyce "rose to the House floor" to recognize the church, according to a report from his office.

The church is located in Joyce's 13th Congressional District.

"I congratulate Reverend Marty Jo Irvin-Stellabotte and the entire Newry Lutheran congregation on this significant milestone and express gratitude for the many ways that the church serves the needs of the community and creates a collective sense of belonging throughout the Blair County community," Joyce said in the report. †

KEEP READING
A message from Bishop Kevin Shock is on Page 19.
More Newry news and photos inside







Photos from the Synod Facebook page

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WE are LUTHERAN

Joe Marvich Catches Relaxation While Fishing

By RICK KAZMER
Editor


Joe Marvich

Fly fishing is a hobby that includes two arts, according to Duncansville Evangelical Lutheran Church member Joe Marvich. The Altoona resident has been arcing lines over the water since he was 10 thanks to instruction from his uncle Dan.

The picturesque and smooth motions that seasoned fly fishermen exhibit aren't learned overnight. Joe said it's the biggest challenge to the hobby.

"I do consider casting an art," Joe, 54, said. "I would tell them (anyone interested in learning) to get competent instruction from the beginning because if you develop bad techniques, they are difficult to correct."

Joe goes fishing to be in nature and to find peace and a slower pace.

"Fly fishing is a way I connect with my faith. The rushing water reminds me of my baptism and the promises God made to me. Being out in nature also gives me an opportunity to slow down, appreciate God's creation, and feel connected to God as our Creator," he said.

Catching fish is also exciting. His most memorable haul was a 12-inch native brook trout in a remote mountain stream. But that one was by no means the biggest. He once caught a 20-inch Snake River fine spotted cutthroat trout in Wyoming. He can most often be spotted fishing for wild trout varieties on class A streams.

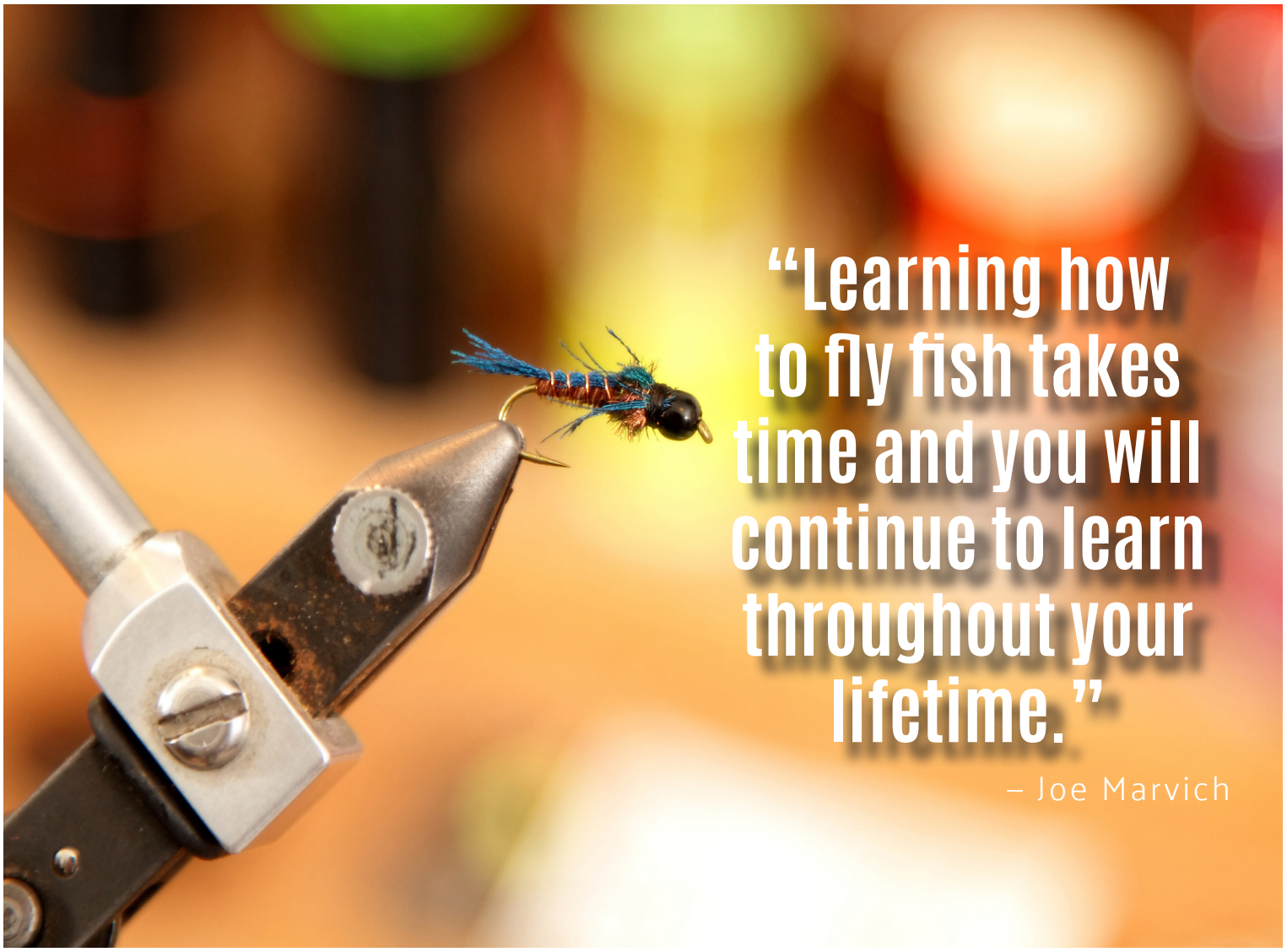
"People should try fishing because it is relaxing and gets you out in the beauty of nature," Joe said. "It is a great hobby for people who live in rural areas."

Joe added that the second art of fly fishing is making your own flies, a task he also undertakes.

"The process is somewhat similar, but you use different techniques to tie different types of flies depending on if they are dry, wet, nymphs, or streamers flies," he said. "We are trying to imitate the aquatic life that lives in the stream."

His advice for anyone just getting started: "Learning how to fly fish takes time and you will continue to learn throughout your lifetime, but it is worth the effort to learn how to fly fish proficiently. The learning curve can be very steep."

(Continued on the next page.)



(Continued from the previous page.)
Joe is the husband to Duncansville Pastor Tiffany Marvich. They have a son, Evan.

WE ARE LUTHERAN

THE LUTHERAN LETTER: What's your earliest memory of attending a Lutheran church?

JOE MARVICH: I started to attend the Lutheran Church in my mid-thirties when I met my wife who is a Lutheran minister.

TLL: What would you tell someone considering attending a Lutheran church for the first time?

JM: I would tell them I appreciate the well-thought-out theology, especially as it relates to grace.

TLL: What are you praying for the most lately?

JM: I have been praying for humankind to take better care of the environment. ✝

Overcoming Biases

By PASTOR JOHN KRATZ
Director, Go Tell It IN The Mountains Initiative

Biases can bite you in the butt, or at least be humbling. On Sept. 1, 2024, I began the work as Director of the Go Tell It IN The Mountains Initiative.

I quickly began the work of seeking trainings and resources to help our clergy and lay preachers' growth and development in preaching. I reached out to our seminaries (Wartburg, United, Luther) and searched online preaching festivals for experts to come in to help us. Hidden within was my bias. I assumed we needed to "go out there" to get what we needed.

This past week, I verbalized what I had come to realize. We have amazing and wonderful resources, skills, and motivated people here, within our synods. We have seen clergy cooperate to create new forms of ministry together, with the Wednesday Evening cooperative Bible study being the newest work. We have seen the skill and wisdom of clergy and lay preachers in our cohorts, training sessions, daily "Get Ready For Sunday" videos, and synod leadership.

I have been blessed to realize my bias was faulty as I have been blessed by so many within our synods engaging and leading this Initiative in directions and ministries I never thought possible at the beginning.

I know I could have shared other biases that have affected my ministry over the years. That would be a humbling project. This specific example, though, was realized just this week and that is why I share it today. Now, honestly, I ask you: What bias do you carry that hinders your ministry today? Is it the bias that one church, one pastor is the best model? Is that bias that a pastor is to be of a certain age range, or needs to be a man? Is it the bias that the professionals run ministry and I am in a cheerleading role? These bias bugaboos do have a wide range of impact, don't they?

May God grant us all wisdom, discernment, and humility to discover and repent from our biases that negatively affect our ministries. †



KEEP READING
A holiday message from Pastor Ted Williams is on Page 8.

WEDNESDAY EVENING Pericope-Based BIBLESTUDY



Let's work together to bring weekly, pericope-based Bible study to our congregations and beyond– through Zoom!

ZOOM DETAILS

https://zoom.us/j/94173815852?pwt=e74xTbZSrFi61YbwyCRAkGgMeox1G1

Meeting Id: 941 7381 5852 | Passcode: 880291

WEDNESDAY EVENING SCHEDULE

BASE SCHEDULE

- **6:30 PM** - Opening greeting and prayer for illumination
- **6:33 PM** - Study of the upcoming Sunday's texts
- **7:20 PM** - Prayer requests and praises

EXPANDED SCHEDULE

- **6:15–6:25 PM** - Zoom session opens
- **6:30 PM** - Greeting & Prayer for illumination
- **6:33 PM** - Gospel, Old Testament and Epistle lessons, with time for discussion and real-life application
- **7:20 PM** - Prayer time
- **7:30 PM** - Conclude & end Zoom

LET'S DO THIS TOGETHER!
GO TELL IT IN THE Mountains

EMAIL US:
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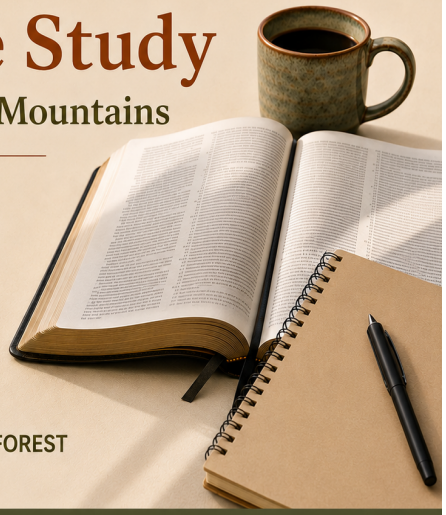
Pericope Study

Go Tell It IN The Mountains



Date
2026 NOVEMBER 18

Time
09:00 - 3:00PM

Location
ZOOM

With
REV. DR. ALLISON DEFOREST

(BREAK FOR LUNCH)

https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0A4EA4AE29A5F8C34-65426316-pericope

Pericope Study Series Continues!

Go Tell It IN The Mountains invites you to the 2nd of 4 Zoom sessions with Rev. Dr. Allison DeForest — **a deep dive into text study** that helps us read with clarity, context, and courage.

Come ready to learn, listen, and grow.

IN-PERSON GATHERINGS FOR THE SECOND SESSION

Washingtonville Lutheran Church (80 Strawberry Ridge Rd, Washingtonville, PA 17884) and **Faith Lutheran Church** (5414 E. Lake Road, Erie, PA 16511) have generously offered to host **an in-person gathering** for the second session. This event offers a great opportunity to restore the fellowship that is often missed on Zoom, while still attending the Zoom Session

All are welcome to attend, and lunch will be provided. This gathering is open to all lay and clergy preachers, as well as area Lutheran and ecumenical partners.

Ready for Sunday

Pause. Listen. Prepare your heart for worship.



Every week starts with a brand-new Gospel reading — and on Day 1, you hear it straight from Scripture.

Then the real momentum kicks in: quick, daily one-minute videos that stop the rush, spark your curiosity, and get your heart ready for worship.

You'll get just what you need to go deeper: a little more context, reflections that make the story come alive, and bold, personal questions that help you see where the Gospel fits into your own life.

It's fast. It's simple. It's powerful. And it helps you walk into Sunday already tuned in, already awake, already ready to hear God's Word with clarity and confidence.

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Come and See
Born This Day . . . A Savior

Luke 2:8-14

Now in that same region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for see, I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

By PASTOR TED WILLIAMS
Pine Hall Lutheran, State College

It's that time of year again to get ready for Christmas to celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, we often become so engrossed in the traditions of Christmas that we don't take time to reflect on the birth of Jesus.

(Continued on the next page.)

Registration is now open!

Visit

https://www.alleghenysynod.org/youth-resources

to download the registration packet

The Weekend.

Allegheny Synod Youth Event
December 11-13, 2026
St. James Lutheran Church & Comfort Inn
Huntingdon, PA

(Continued from the previous page.)

We plan parties, put up decorations to impress, and seek the perfect gift for our loved ones. There can be a lot of stress around this celebration.

This year I challenge all of us, to "Come and see!" what the shepherds saw.

Shepherds seem like an unlikely group of folks to feature in a story about Jesus' birth. They weren't on the higher rungs of the social ladder.

They were often isolated in the fields tending their flocks. Yet, they were the group of folks that God sent an angel to proclaim the good news of Jesus' birth and an invitation to "Come and see!"

God didn't send the angels to the religious leaders, the king, or the Roman government, but rather to simple folks in the field tending their flocks. This is a message from God that the good news is for all, especially those who may have been outsiders.

The invitation extends to us today to "Come and See!" We too have the invitation to come to the Babe in the manger and see the great gift God has given us.

Martin Luther in his Christmas meditations says "Trust Him! Trust Him! Here is the Child in whom is salvation … The power of sin, death, hell, conscience, and guilt is overcome if you come to adore this gurgling Babe, and believe that He is come, not to judge you, but to save you."

That was the point of God come to Earth. To be born in human flesh, fully human and fully divine, but to fulfill God's promises of forgiveness and eternal life.

So, this Christmas season, take time to reflect on the Babe in the manger. Knowing that God has provided the best gift we could ever hope for.

"Come and see!"

LET US PRAY

Gracious and merciful God. We thank you for the gift of the Babe in the manger that was sent for our salvation.

(Continued on the next page.)

WE are LUTHERAN

Is looking for people to feature!
Know someone in your congregation who is doing unique things, has a cool hobby, or is making a difference? Email contact information to Editor Rick Kazmer at **r9remzak@hotmail.com**.

Effective 4/1/2026

The Lutheran Letter

PUBLISHED BY THE ALLEGHENY SYNOD

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By _____

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with check made payable to the Allegheny Synod, ELCA

20-YEAR PATRONS

Special 20-year Patrons is a year-long opportunity, running through the May/June 2027 issue. Funding collected through this project will be sent to ELCA World Hunger work. **Email Michelle Bossler at Michelle.Bossler@AlleghenySynod.com to become a 20-year anniversary Patron, or mail this form to the Synod office**

The Lutheran Letter is a bi-monthly digital publication.

Candidacy Updates Announced







Photos from the Synod Facebook page

In early October, the Allegheny Synod 8C Candidacy Committee met and conducted interviews with people in formation for public ministry. Pictured with Deacon Alicia Anderson, Assistant to the Bishop for Formation are:

- **Cindy Doherty, granted Entrance to Word and Sacrament candidacy**
- **Rebecca Rabb, granted Entrance to Word and Service candidacy**
- **Josh Spangler, granted Approval for ordination to the Word and Sacrament roster.**

(Continued from the previous page.)
We come before you this Christmas season with open hearts and minds.

We ask that you guide us with your Spirit to hear the good news and share that good news with others in the world through thought, word, and deed. We ask all in the name of the Babe in the manger, Jesus Christ our Lord. †



Some thoughts about Ministry, Leadership, and Candidacy in the Allegheny Synod

By DEACON ALICIA ANDERSON
Assistant to the Bishop for Formation in the Allegheny Synod

Ministry of all the Baptized

As people of God, we serve our neighbors, the world, and God in a wide variety of ways.

At baptism, we are invited into the work of loving and caring for God's creation and sharing the Gospel in all that we do and say. There are as many ways to live out our baptismal call as there are baptized people. Each one of us has gifts and we play our part in the ministry of love, peace, mercy, justice, forgiveness, and new life that Jesus began.

Leadership in the church

Some among us are drawn to take on roles of leadership in the church. In congregations and parishes, people lead projects, committees, councils and task forces. Many teach children and take care of buildings, organize fundraisers and visit homebound, plan worship, and help feed the hungry. Alongside these leaders, some are called to serve as Rostered Ministers in the church.

Candidacy in the ELCA

We intentionally and prayerfully walk with candidates for rostered ministry in Word and Sacrament (pastor) and Word and Service (deacon). The candidacy process brings students together with many people who help them grow and learn through their academic studies, practical ministry experiences, written reflection on their learning, formal and informal conversations, and ongoing prayer. Just some of the partners in the candidacy process are candidacy committee members and mentors, seminary faculty and staff, congregational members, rostered leaders serving as mentors, as well as synod and churchwide staff.

Assistant to the Bishop for Formation

In my role on the synod staff working with candidacy, I talk with people who are just starting to consider rostered ministry, as well as applicants, and candidates. I work with the candidacy committee, supporting their work and facilitating meetings and communication. I manage all sorts of paperwork connected with the candidacy process for each applicant and candidate.

I connect with our churchwide staff and Bishop Kevin Shock to guide and support candidates. I help connect people to information and resources that will assist them in their process. I pray for candidates as they are being formed and called to serve the church and all God's beloved children.

(Continued on the next page.)

Gifted with the Presence of God

"I really want to see you to pass along some spiritual gift to you so that you can be strengthened. What I mean is that we can mutually encourage each other while I am with you. We can be encouraged by the faithfulness we find in each other, both your faithfulness and mine." – Romans 1:11-12

By DEADON SUE ELLEN SPOTTS
Director of Evangelical Mission



Sue Ellen Spotts, Director of Evangelical Mission

We used this verse to lead off the first Synod Ambassadors' Summit in September. Then we spent the hour sharing the gift of stories. Stories of what is happening in our congregations. Stories of how God is doing new things in and through us.

Through this conversation, we were able to encourage each other and be inspired by each other.

These connections help us see the broader picture of how God is active in and through the congregations of the Allegheny Synod.

We are entering a season that focuses on gathering and giving. Holiday meals are being planned. Traditions will unfold. Traveling and celebrating will take place. There will be joyful reunions. There may also be lonely longing in the wake of change, of missing people or familiar traditions.

And there will be presents.

The presents around the tree, in the stockings, taken to the host of the meal, sent to those who can't join us in person.

Even as we may anticipate certain presents, we will tell each other (especially our children) and ourselves that it's not about the presents.

But, for followers of Jesus, it is all about presence.

We sing, "O Come, Emmanuel" believing that God did indeed come among us at the Nativity. We believe that God continues to dwell among us.

(Continued on the next page.)

(Continued from the previous page.)

I am grateful to serve the church in this role. It is an honor to walk with people at various points in their journey to rostered ministry, to hear about their learning and growth, and to see them develop skills, confidence, and theological understanding for rostered ministry in the ELCA. If you would like to learn more, please contact me at alicia.anderson@alleghenysynod.org. †

Go Tell it IN the Mountains Offers Weekly Online Bible Studies

Go Tell it IN The Mountains has begun an online Bible study led by rostered leaders Wednesday evenings from 6:30 to 7:30 pm.

This weekly online event was started so that everyone has access to study and learn about the scriptures, especially people who attend congregations without a full-time pastor or where there is not regular Bible study. Attendees will study the scripture readings for the upcoming Sunday. **Click this link.** †

Meeting Id: 941 7381 5852 |
Passcode: 880291

KEEP READING

A massive blanket project is gaining momentum. See how you can become involved.

(Continued from the previous page.)

And we believe that we bear witness to that presence when we extend the love and grace of God to others.

Ministry of presence is the simple act of being with people in a way that conveys they are beloved, they have worth, they are not alone. This holiday season will offer us many opportunities, as individuals and congregations, to demonstrate to others that there is a loving, gracious God at work in the world through us. What opportunities might you see to visit, to feed, to invite, to assist?

At the next ambassadors' summit in January we will share where we have been gifted with the presence of God; where we have been the presence of God to others; and how our congregations are sharing the presence of God in our communities. It's not too late to sign up to be an ambassador from your congregation.

Email your name and congregation to sueellen.spotts@elca.org and you'll be added to the list for the Zoom invite.

Even if you are not an ambassador, I welcome the stories you have of your congregation being the presence of God's love inside and outside the walls of your congregation. Let me know if you have a story to share.

Email me at sueellen.spotts@elca.com. †

Flight 93 National Memorial Blanket Project Gears Up

By THE LUTHERAN LETTER

Allegheny and Lower Susquehanna Synods are partnering together in November to help raise awareness and provide warmth to neighbors experiencing homelessness.

From 1-3 p.m. Nov. 17, the Homeless Remembrance Blanket Project will gather at the Flight 93 National Memorial, 6424 Lincoln Highway, Stoystown, for a preview event.

This year marks the sixth year of the Homeless Remembrance Blanket Project, a grassroots effort that brings together thousands of people who knit, crochet, quilt, sew, collect, transport, and distribute handmade blankets for neighbors experiencing homelessness.

For this event, handmade blankets will be displayed at the Flight 93 National Memorial to honor the service and care of first responders and remember the many ways emergency responders encounter and assist people experiencing homelessness in our communities.

The event will also include backpacks filled with necessities for first responders, who regularly respond when people are displaced or in crisis.

Since the blanket project began in 2021 in Carlisle, it has amassed thousands of volunteers and has become a nationwide project that brings awareness to the issue of homelessness and has distributed nearly 8,000 blankets. Board members of the Charles Bruce Foundation, together with representatives from the ELCA, make up the backbone of the project, but communities across the nation help each year. Everyone is welcome.

The blanket project collects handmade blankets from across the country and around the world to assemble a massive art display. Thousands of volunteers create afghans, quilts, and woven blankets. Following the display, the blankets are gently folded and given to agencies for distribution to folks in need. By January, blanket makers start creating again.

The Flight 93 Memorial event is open to everyone.

The Lower Susquehanna Synod and Allegheny Synod are participating together, joining community members, first responders, partners, and friends from across the region. For more information about the Homeless Remembrance Blanket Project, click here. †

Denver, Blanketed



Photo from the Memorial Blanket Project website

Blankets made for the 2025 event in Denver, Colorado.

A Brief History of Newry Lutheran

By PASTOR MARTY JO IRVIN-STELLABOTTE
Newry Lutheran

On June 6, 1801, Patrick Cassidy deeded a tract of land in the borough of Newry, Pennsylvania, for the purpose of building a Lutheran church. Since that time, the congregation has worshiped in three different sanctuaries with more than 40 pastors serving behind the pulpit.

The congregation celebrated this milestone anniversary of 225 years of ministry and service to the community with a worship service and reception at the end of September.

Several former pastors returned to participate in the service, including The Rev. Dr. Barry Folmar, The Rev. Michael Rhyne, and The Rev. Richard Henry.

Current and former members and guests reunited for an afternoon of food, fellowship, and memory-sharing.

Popular history within the congregation is that in its first years, the church had a dirt floor, did not have proper pews, and held a pulpit made from unfinished lumber.

(Continued on the next Page.)





Submitted photos

Photos of congregation members and pastors from Newry Lutheran Church from during the years.

(Continued from the previous page.)

However, records indicate that by 1816 the congregation had improved the building enough that it was able to purchase a new pulpit for $40.

During these early years Newry had many different pastors, with most serving from two to three years. One of the most notable was The Rev. JCF "Father" Heyer. Pastor Heyer was the pastor at Newry from 1820-1822, which was his first full-time call. He was known as the first American Lutheran missionary, opening up the mission fields in India and is seen by many as the "father" of Lutheranism in India.

Newry was the primary Lutheran church in the Hollidaysburg/Newry area throughout the 19th century and served as the base of operation for missionary pastors who served as circuit riders into western Pennsylvania. Newry also served as the mother church for several congregations in the area, offering financial support and members to form new congregations.

Churches that were formed out of Newry Lutheran or which Newry was instrumental in the formation of include First and Second Lutheran in Altoona, St. Paul in East Freedom, Christ in Claysburg, St. Luke in Roaring Spring, and Evangelical in Duncansville.

The current building is the third sanctuary for Newry Lutheran Church. The first building stood behind the current church on the hill; the footprint of this original church can still be seen in the cemetery behind the current building. The second building was constructed in the 1840s and was in the parking lot/alley behind the church. The current church building was constructed in 1883. ✝

Monthly Mundy's Fun







Submitted photos

Monthly family events have become anticipated gatherings at St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Mundy's Corner. The events range from Earth Day activities and Souper Cook-Offs to Breakfast with Santa and Trunk or Treat. These events encourage socialization among members and lots of fun, too. Community members are invited and often come to enjoy the activities along with church-goers.

Remembering the Cental Things

A message from Bishop Kevin Shock.



Bishop Shock

A few weeks ago while preaching on the Parable of the Tenant Farmers (Matthew 21:33-46), an unscripted line came out of my mouth. In a section of the sermon where I was talking about the tenants exercising control of a vineyard that isn't theirs, I simply noted that "sometimes we try to exercise control of the Church through budgets and bylaws." Huh. Did I say that?

If you have heard me preach, you may know that there are many unscripted lines; however, some of those lines clearly come not from me, but from the Holy Spirit.

I know this to be true, because I say some things in preaching that go beyond my own insight or wit.

They are lines that cause me to think, "Huh. Did I say that?" These lines cause me to reflect.

Most of what I preach, I forget within days or hours. I still remember that line weeks later. One thing that has surprised me in this role as bishop is how easily ministry turns into administration. You can see that those two words – ministry and administration – have the same root, so maybe I shouldn't be surprised. When I was called to this role, pastoral presence felt to me to be the most important thing. There are days when I serve the church in that way. There are many other days when dawn to dark is spent sorting through emails, setting agendas, sitting in meetings, consulting on issues or potential issues, completing forms and surveys, and answering technical questions.

On those days, I confess to you that I make the mistake of choosing email over prayer, because the mountain of work seems insurmountable. Some days it feels like the work of a bishop is choosing budgets and bylaws over prayer and presence, but I also understand that I'm still finding my way in this role. In any case, I find that ministry can easily get lost in the machinery of the church.

Lately, I've been thinking about the "business" of the early church. Acts 2 outlines four things that the earliest post-resurrection, Spirit-filled followers of Jesus were devoted to doing together:

The apostles' teaching – In our time devotion to this practice might include weekly worship attendance and regular gathering with other congregation members for Bible study or reading and discussing the confessional documents of our tradition.

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It might mean attending online or in person courses for all people through our seminaries. There are many ways for us to engage in scriptural and theological learning and reflection together.

Fellowship – This is not about coffee hour; it's about community. Looking within our congregation to making sure the needs of all the people there are being met is the root of koinonia in the church. Looking beyond our congregations is part of how the church lives out koinonia today. Love and care for our neighbors is an essential practice in Jesus calling us to follow him.

Breaking of bread – Shared meals, not just Communion, are where we are fed both physically and spiritually. We learn about one another when we are present with one another, and we learn about Jesus, because he is present with us. This could be a monthly practice in congregations. It could be a weekly practice. In the early church, and in other churches around the globe today, it is a daily practice.

Prayers – This practice might be the most understandable, but it's important to note that the early church did this communally, together, not necessarily in their own homes or on their individual schedules. Listening to the Spirit and listening to one another in community, then offering thanksgiving and intercession is essential to our life together.

It's important to note that when the church was devoted to these four things, it was growing exponentially. Somewhere along the way, these became the things that we tag on to our business to make sure that we still want Jesus to be a part of what we do. I wonder how God might transform us if these things were at the center of what we do in our congregational lives and our personal lives. I know that I feel called to recenter these practices, and to be recentered by the Spirit in these practices. It requires showing up for one another, which is not something our culture encourages, and which is difficult when the mountain of email is growing. I pray, and ask you to pray, that God might lead us back to central things. †

A brief note on the upcoming election

As we approach another election in a politically polarized and divisive climate, I simply offer some words and a prayer from the ELCA's recent social statement on Faith and Civic Life: Seeking the Well-being of All:

"No single solution will reduce the increasingly fevered polarization of the U.S. or repair the damage that endangers our social fabric and democratic republic.

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"One fundamental element is a renewed, constructively grounded, and thoughtful commitment to civic life across this nation. Hyperpartisan polarization is, in part, the result of individuals withdrawing from widespread participation in civic life. This church holds that the return to a robust civic engagement as a public good is both our calling as Christians and our responsibility as residents of this country. [C]ivic engagement takes numerous forms – informed voting, attendance at public meetings, holding public office, political party involvement, policy advocacy, community organizing, and nonviolent protest.

"May we walk humbly with you, O loving God, as we strive for justice, kindness, and peace in human society. May we as your church live wisely by the civic use of the Law in joining your purpose toward shalom. May we, as your people, join all others of goodwill in the work of government as gift, aspiration, and responsibility to serve the common good of "we the people." May we, as your forgiven ones, be empowered by your gracious Word and Sacraments to courageously seek the well-being of all through our participation in civic life." (pp. 70-71)

God direct us in civic engagement, guide us to resist divisive thought and speech, unite us in our care for one another, and lead us into lasting peace. **– Bishop Kevin †**

Allegheny Synod

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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