

# CONFERENCE REPORTS

## Bedford Conference

The Bedford Conference is the smallest of the Conferences and consists of seven congregations. The Rostered Leaders are the Reverend Judy Simonson (Mt. Zion, Breezewood), the Reverend Kathy Popp (Zion, Everett) and the Reverend David Wright (St. Clairsville Parish – St. Peter’s, Osterburg and Messiah, Bedford). Mt. Olive and Christ Lutheran are served by TEEM student, Vicar Penny Koontz. Congregational Lay Leader Robbie Roland serves Zion, Clearville. During 2022, the Central Bedford Lutheran Parish departed from the ELCA for the NALC.

At the Conference Caucus in 2022, Pastor David Wright was re-elected to a second term as Conference Dean.

The Conference Pastors have resumed meeting on a fairly regular basis, primarily for collegial support and fellowship. Each of the congregations has resumed in-person Worship on their regular schedules, as well as other congregational activities.

Respectfully submitted,

The Reverend David Wright, Dean  
Bedford Conference

## Blair-Huntingdon Conference

2022-2023

This year our Conference enjoyed relative stability in terms of congregational affiliation and pastoral leadership, with no new departures, vacancies or transitions.

Both current and retired clergy met for text study most weeks at local coffee shops and restaurants, as well as for Conference meetings most months either at a hosting congregation or outside at one of our area parks.

Since Christmas and New Year’s Day fell on Sundays and altered some congregations’ schedules, the conference pastors worked together to create a comprehensive list of in-person and digital holiday worship opportunities, particularly for the members of congregations that do not have regular pastoral leadership. The clergy are grateful for the work of the Bishop’s staff in clarifying the practice of extending the table to our neighboring congregations who rarely have an ordained pastor leading Sunday worship.

St. Luke Roaring Spring served as a field education site for the 2022-2023 academic year for ULS seminarian Jen Bobolsky; under the supervision of Pastor Amanda McCaffery, Vicar Jen preached, taught, and assisted with Snow Camp at Sequanota.

Several youth from our conference attended the Synod’s learning trip to Washington, D.C. and Caroline Furnace Lutheran Camp last summer, which was planned after the cancellation of the 2022 ELCA Youth Gathering. Conference youth are preparing to travel to Florida this July for the Synod’s hurricane relief service trip.

Our Conference is excited to host the Synod’s first junior-senior high retreat since before the pandemic. The Weekend will be held December 8-10, 2023 at St. James in Huntingdon.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Traci A. Marriott, Dean  
(Pastor, St. Matthew Martinsburg)

## Clearfield Conference

The Clearfield Conference includes ten congregations, nine of which are in partnerships. The rostered leaders are: The Rev. Robert Way (St. John, Clearfield), The Rev. Christine Roe (First Faith Lutheran Cooperative) and The Rev. Vicki Beilfuss (Holy Shepherd Parish).

Pr. Way also serves as the vacancy pastor for St. Peter, Luthersburg, and St. John, Rockton. Both of these congregations depend on Dick Hertlein to lead them in worship. The communities of Grace and Salem in Olanta, until recently, were served by Authorized Lay Minister, Richard Steuernagle.

Conference losses include: Richard Steuernagle, who died on Friday, February 3, 2023. The Revs. Amy Godshall Miller and John Miller along with Christ Lutheran Church, DuBois disaffiliated with the Allegheny Synod in January 2023 for the NALC.

St. John's has seen an increase in attendance, both returning members, as well as, some new folks. Outside groups using their building are in full force. They are delighted to report the ability to increase the number of boxes for Operation Christmas Child to 260 this past season.

First Faith Lutheran Cooperative consists of Faith United, Houtzdale and First Evangelical, Philipsburg. Several new members have been welcomed, including two baptisms. Ministries inside and outside the walls of the buildings continue. The Lydia's Circle of Faith United manages funds for parishioners in need of fuel assistance and are now reaching out to folks who live alone, gifting them with prayer shawls. This group also collaborates with the community for a Ministerium event called "80s and Over Dinner."

First Evangelical's *All God's Animals Pet Pantry* continues to serve people age 55 and over. The two congregations

partner in collecting pull tabs for Shriners and gently used eyeglasses for the Lion's Club. Summer of 2022 they also collected items for Military Families Ministry USA. Both communities share space inside their buildings with others, have active Eucharistic ministry teams, and share in their lives of prayer together. Life in ministry together is of great value for both communities.

The leadership of Holy Shepherd Parish (HSP)—Holy Trinity, Lanse and Shepherd of the Hills, Karthaus—did the work of discerning mission, vision, and goal setting with the help of Pr. Kevin Shock. Currently they are working on increasing ties between the two congregations, as well as, reestablishing connections with their surrounding communities. Realizing the congregations are stronger together, Worship, Education, and Outreach committee work is done together.

Joint stewardship efforts saw a collection of 40 lbs of pull tabs for Ronald McDonald House, 2 large boxes of school supplies for West Branch school teachers, and 2 large boxes of items for the Hollidaysburg Home enrichment. The Parish Quilters created 200 quilts and Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Preschool continues to fill a vital need in the area. Both, individually raised money to help congregants with difficulties and have supported the local ecumenical Ministerium "Neighbors Helping Neighbors" program.

Loving and serving God, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, our small conference of churches finds meaningful ways to love and serve our faith communities and our neighborhoods in the name of Jesus.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Vicki Beilfuss  
Clearfield Conference Dean

## Johnstown Conference

The Johnstown Conference of the Allegheny Synod comprises twelve congregations in Cambria County and in Somerset County. The pastors of the conference meet regularly at different locations within the conference and several of the pastors gather on Wednesday mornings for Bible Study and fellowship.

The past year has seen significant transition among the congregations. Three pastors have taken calls outside the Allegheny Synod and we wish them well as the Holy Spirit has called these pastors to serve new congregations. Second, Trinity Lutheran Church voted to leave the ELCA and to affiliate with the North American Lutheran Church; Pastor Toby Holland has resigned from the roster of the ELCA as a result of this vote. Third, Pastor Walter Startzel,

covenant pastor to First Lutheran Church, Johnstown, died very suddenly at the end of August, 2022. Pastor Startzel's funeral was a wonderful celebration of his life and ministry to the numerous congregations he served. Since his death, First Lutheran Johnstown has been served by a number of supply pastors who have helped to continue the work of the Church in Johnstown.

Five congregations within the Johnstown Conference are in discernment about their futures and we pray that the Holy Spirit will assist in discerning their future.

Pastor Mark Fischer  
Dean, Johnstown Conference

## Laurel Highlands Conference

Our conference experienced a change in leadership this year, when Dean Dena Gable accepted a call outside our Synod. In September, Rev. Glenn Foster was appointed (volunteered) to serve as Interim Dean until the conference could elect a new Dean at our Spring Conference meeting.

During the year, we've had monthly clergy meetings to discuss the needs of the Conference, and for support for each other, particularly during this time when we have had so many vacant parishes in our Conference. Our pastors have been providing coverage for emergency visitation, hospitals, weddings, and funerals for these vacant churches.

Also, the *Grace Delivered*, trailer ministry has been active. They were in the Jubilee Parade in New Centerville

with youth distributing candy and other items. They distributed t-shirts and snacks at the Pray for Peace services. They partnered with the Lazarus Gate Food Pantry in Rockwood transporting donated items from CVS to be distributed there, along with serving meals from donated food. They have also retrieved items for Camp Sequanota. Interested parties for the *Grace Delivered* trailer or other information about the work of *Grace Delivered* can contact Ann Ferry.

At our Spring Assembly, we elected Rev. Tyler Graham of the Salisbury Lutheran Parish to be our new Dean.

Respectfully submitted,

Rev. Glenn Foster  
Interim Dean

## Nittany Conference

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The rostered ministers of the Nittany Conference continue to meet monthly using Zoom or meeting in person for prayer, support and idea sharing. We will be hosting Tracy de Pasquale from Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa) at our May meeting. These gatherings have been well received by our colleagues and provide helpful opportunities to walk with each other and help our congregations and ministries navigate the challenges of ministry.

Since I began serving as dean, the only pastoral transition in the Nittany Conference has been Pastor Kevin Shock taking a new call to serve in the Allegheny Synod office. Vicar

Ted Williams continues to serve as transitional minister at St. Mark Lutheran in Pleasant Gap as the leadership there seeks a new pastor through the synod call process.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve within the Nittany Conference and thank God for the people and leaders here.

In Christ,

Deacon Alicia Anderson  
Nittany Conference Dean  
Campus Minister with Lutheran Campus Ministry  
at Penn State