

# The LUTHERAN Letter

TO INFORM, INSPIRE AND ILLUMINATE

## Digital

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### Summer Edition

New feature, 'We Are Lutheran'

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE



*Submitted photo*

Pastor David Bowman has the recipe for this sweet dessert inside. **STORY IS ON PAGE 5.**

## Here's a *taste* of SUMMER

### 'The Lord has Truly Blessed Us'

*Despite Growing Need, High Food Costs, Multi-denomination Food Bank is a Success Story*

By **PASTOR KEVIN McNAMARA**  
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Mundy's Corner

In the spring of 2014, organizers from the local food pantry for the communities of Nanty Glo, Mundy's Corner and Jackson Township in Cambria County announced it was closing their doors for financial and other reasons.

The clergy of the Conemaugh Valley Ministerium decided to pray and to present the need to the Lord and to their respective congregations.

**(See FOOD 1 Page 9)**



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

# The LUTHERAN Letter

TO INFORM, INSPIRE AND ILLUMINATE

is published bi-monthly by the  
**ALLEGHENY SYNOD OF THE ELCA**

Bishop Paula Schmitt

701 Quail Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602-3010

Phone: 814-942-1042 • Fax: 814-941-9259

[www.AlleghenySynod.org](http://www.AlleghenySynod.org) •

email: [Office@AlleghenySynod.com](mailto:Office@AlleghenySynod.com)

## EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor Rick Kazmer

Copy Editor Courtney Kazmer

Email: [r9remzak@hotmail.com](mailto:r9remzak@hotmail.com)

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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

Called by God to be one in Christ: we worship, grow in faith and serve all people.

## OUR VISION

Because Christ is here... We are actively engaging in God's work and sharing the Gospel as the Holy Spirit increases the followers of Jesus 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.)

Send files to [LutheranLetter@AlleghenySynod.com](mailto:LutheranLetter@AlleghenySynod.com).

## CONTACT US

Newsletter: [r9remzak@hotmail.com](mailto:r9remzak@hotmail.com)

Bishop Schmitt: [Office@AlleghenySynod.com](mailto:Office@AlleghenySynod.com)

Michelle Bossler: [Michelle.Bossler@AlleghenySynod.com](mailto:Michelle.Bossler@AlleghenySynod.com)

Assistant to the Bishop Pastor Kevin Shock:

[kevin.shock@alleghenysynod.com](mailto:kevin.shock@alleghenysynod.com)



Allegheny Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

# Rebuilding

## *A Message from Bishop Paula Schmitt*

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Just a few weeks ago, we came together for the Allegheny Synod Assembly under the theme Built on a Rock. It was a day to hear reports, hold elections and vote on important business for our Synod, including a spending plan and compensation guidelines. All the information we talked about — and some we didn't — can be found on the Allegheny Synod website in the Synod Assembly tab.

We heard from Presiding Bishop Eaton about the ELCA's goal of engaging one million new, young and diverse people. Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State and Camp Sequanota are prime ministries here on our territory that directly address this goal toward a growing, vibrant church.

One way you can participate in this whole-church goal is to support these two ministries both with your financial contributions and your contributions of time and prayer. There are many and various ways to support these ministries. I have often heard people say, "I don't have kids that age anymore" as a way to direct donations elsewhere. While that may be true, I believe you do want to see the church continue to grow and for young people to remain connected to their faith. Any size donation to one or both of these ministries will help support the good work already going on and sustain it into the future. I encourage you to make a contribution to help support these partners.



**Bishop Paula Schmitt**

(See BISHOP 1, Page 21)





Photo from the Allegheny Synod Facebook page

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Thanks to these individuals and groups for their generous donations, which helped to make this issue of The Lutheran Letter possible.

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# Faithful Assemble

By THE LUTHERAN LETTER

The Allegheny Synod Assembly was held in June.

This year the event was held online. The photo at left shows the technology setup that was used to help make the event a special one.

Assembly is a time when synod leadership gathers to conduct business, name leaders to committees and other posts, and take other necessary actions for the good of the order. †

## Lutheran Letter Patron Form

If you would like to support the *Lutheran Letter* as a patron or make a donation, please complete this form and return it to:

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*Submitted photos*

**Some of the faithful who went on the trip with Pastor Olson visited Mount Rushmore and the Badlands.**

# A Lutheran Abroad

*Synod Pastor Participates in Unique Program in South Dakota*

**BY RICK KAZMER**

*The Lutheran Letter Editor*

A pastor from Duncansville recently took up residency near the Badlands.

Pastor Jaime Olson, of Duncansville Evangelical Lutheran Church, took part in a residency at Chapel in the Hills in Rapid City, South Dakota.

"The chapel offers a visiting clergy program where pastors can visit the chapel and stay in a lovely on-site cabin for a week," Olson said in an email about the residency.

The responsibilities include providing evening vespers on three occasions and per-

forming any weddings that are booked.

"The cost of the cabin is so minimal, and with wedding stipends, it becomes a free place to stay while visiting all the wonderful sites offered in the area. Mount Rushmore, the Badlands, Custer State Park, etc.," he wrote.

"With the ELCA national gathering being canceled, 16 of our families and youth joined (us) for service projects and touring the area."

The trip included a 10K Volksmarch, a form of noncompetitive fitness walking, to the face of Crazy Horse, a memorial to the Lakota leader. †



# Lessons From Strawberries

BY PASTOR DAVID BOWMAN  
*Zion Lutheran Church, Hollidaysburg*



Last year I planted strawberry plants in my yard. This year they are plumping up with gorgeous fruit that I can't wait to eat. Who doesn't enjoy a ripe, red strawberry fresh from the source?

It's a well-known fact that strawberries are the only fruit that wear their seeds on the outside. I think that makes them a no-nonsense fruit. Their purpose is apparent from the get-go and I admire that about them.

They exist to make more strawberry plants and they're not shy about it. The church could learn a thing or two from strawberries. What would happen if we were always upfront about our purpose as the Body of Christ instead of letting everything else get in the way?

This recipe is for Strawberry Spoon Cake. It is as delicious as it is uncomplicated. The top layer has a delightful jammy, gooey consistency. The batter is simple and uses basic pantry ingredients. Feel free to double the amount of fruit if you feel it's too sparse, just make sure to extract as much juice as possible when you're macerating and mashing the berries. Strawberries can be substituted for any type of berry, cherries, or even peaches. Spoon Cake also begs to be served warm with a scoop of ice cream.

Enjoy! †

### Ingredients

- 1/2 cup unsalted butter (1 stick), melted, plus more for greasing
- 5 ounces frozen and thawed or fresh, hulled strawberries (about 1 cup,
  - 2/3 cup packed light brown sugar
  - 1/2 cup whole milk, at room temperature
    - 1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
    - 1 teaspoon baking powder
      - 1 cup flour



### Preparation

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees and grease an 8-inch (round or square) baking dish with butter. Set aside.
2. Using your hands, mash the berries to release all their juices. Stir in 1/3 cup of brown sugar. Set aside.
3. In a medium bowl, whisk together the melted butter, remaining 1/3 cup brown sugar, milk and salt. Then add the flour and baking powder and continue whisking just until the batter is smooth. Transfer the batter (it's not much) to the greased baking dish and spread evenly across the vessel.
4. Spoon the fruit and all their juices over the top of the cake batter. Place in the oven and bake for 20 to 25 minutes, or just when a toothpick comes out clean in the center. Remove from the oven and allow to cool for 3 to 5 minutes before spooning into bowls.

**Remember in Prayer**

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

**JULY**

**Week 1:** First Faith Cooperative Ministry: First Lutheran, Phillipsburg; and Faith United Lutheran, Houtzdale

**Week 2:** St. Luke Lutheran, Centre Hall

**Week 3:** St. John, Clearfield

**Week 4:** Christ Lutheran, Johnstown

**AUGUST**

**Week 1:** Friedens Lutheran, Friedens

**Week 2:** Zion Lutheran, Everett

**Week 3:** Holy Shepherd Parish: Holy Trinity Lutheran, Lanse; and Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran, Karthaus

**Week 4:** First English Lutheran, Tyrone

# WE *are* LUTHERAN

## Carol Harding's Life Work has Become a Part of Her Ministry

*(Editor's note: This feature highlights Lutherans in the Allegheny Synod with unique stories.)*

**BY RICK KAZMER**

*The Lutheran Letter Editor*

Carol Harding fills a unique role at Moxham Lutheran Church in Johnstown.

The 76-year-old retired registered nurse serves as her congregation's parish nurse, a duty she started in 2014 after her pastor asked her to consider the responsibility.

"The most rewarding thing about being a nurse is making a difference in the lives of others. It may be my congregation, their families or students. Nursing offers so many varied practice arenas," Harding said.

The widowed mother of one daughter attended a parish nurse class online at Eastern Mennonite University, receiving a certificate after 400 hours of study. Parish nurses must be registered nurses.

Harding said it is a recognized specialty practice that combines professional ministry and health ministry.

"Faith community nursing emphasizes health and healing within a faith community. The philosophy of parish nursing embraces four major concepts: spiritual formation; professionalism; shalom as health and



**Carol Harding**

wholeness; and community, incorporating culture and diversity. I am a member of the ELPNA (Evangelical Lutheran Parish Nurse Association)," she said.

During the heart of the pandemic, Harding was not able to meet with congregational members at her church office, which she said was difficult.

"I found my biggest challenge was making sure the congregation knew the pastor and others also thought and cared about them. We shared many prayers, lots of laughter and concerns over the phone," Harding said.

She has had many rewarding experiences during the years.

**(See HARDING, Page 14)**

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**Andrea K. Paul**

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Financial Associate

412 Allegheny Street, Suite 103

Hollidaysburg, PA 16648

814-695-3496



# AN ABIDING PRESENCE

**This feature is part of an ongoing series examining the people and images portrayed on stained-glass windows in the Church of the Abiding Presence in Gettysburg.**



## *Samuel Simon Schmucker* (More on Page 8)

*(Editor's note: This information is from an historical marker at the United Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg.)*

Founder of the Lutheran Theological Seminary and nearby Gettysburg College, Samuel Simon Schmucker (1799-1873) guided the school through its early years and the tumultuous Civil War period.

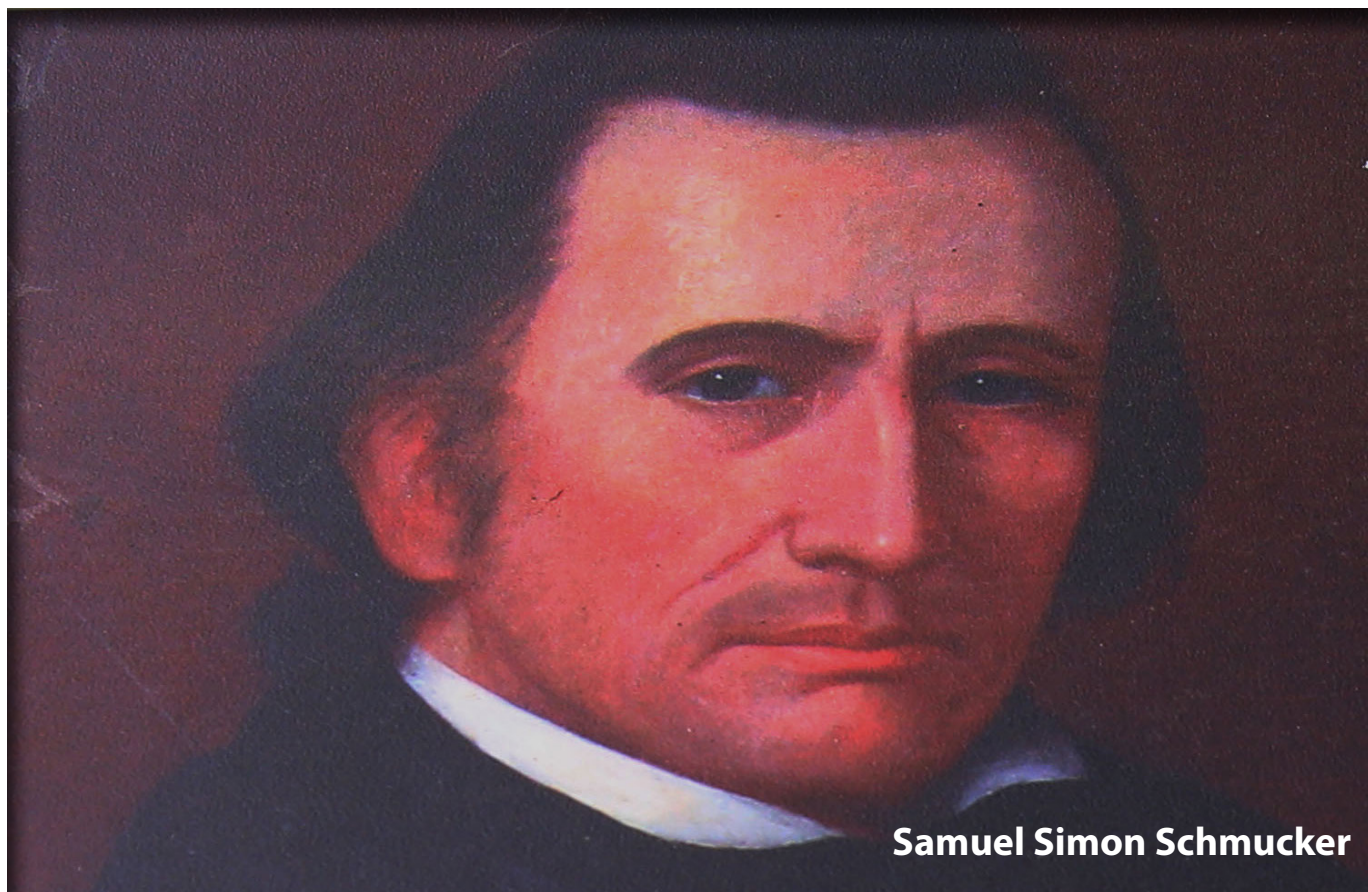
Intelligent, energetic, well educated and deeply pious, Schmucker was the "very life and formative power" of the Seminary for nearly 40 years. One contemporary observed that he never knew a man "who needed and took less relaxation from severe mental toil than he."

As a leader of American Lutherans, Schmucker authored more than 40 publications on theology, church history and philosophy.

His progressive religious views and opposition to slavery made him a lightning rod for controversy within his own church.

As the most visible Lutheran leader in America, his views were well known throughout the country and within wider Evangelical and Reformed circles internationally.

When he retired in 1864, a reporter proclaimed that few men had accomplished "more good for the church and the general welfare of society." †



# 'God has of One Blood Created all Nations'

*(Editor's note: This information is from an historical marker at the United Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg.)*

Samuel Simon Schmucker served as a professor at the Lutheran seminary at Gettysburg. The President's House he lived in, built in 1833, still stands.

Runaway slaves were said to have sought aid at a barn on the property as they fled north. Schmucker preached against slavery.

"God has of one blood created all nations to dwell on the face of the earth, has endowed them all with certain unalienable rights and obligations, such as life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness. All who fail to labor for the extinction of slavery are guilty of sin," he said.

His former home bears scars from the Gettysburg battle, including an artillery projectile stuck in the south wall. †





*Submitted photos*

**Some photos of volunteers helping to package food, and of a distribution, for the Interfaith Community Food Pantry.**

## FOOD 1

*(Continued from Page 1)*

The response by the churches was overwhelmingly positive. The need to have a food pantry continue to serve these communities was urgent.

It was decided not to continue the old food pantry, but to start a new pantry called, The Interfaith Community Food Pantry (ICEP).

The response by our Lord has been overwhelmingly positive as well. Our prayers have been answered month after month. The ICEP had no warehouse or distribution center at the beginning. The first distribution was in July 2014, and was done out of a local firehouse.

We really didn't know what we were doing, but the Lord was in our corner and we were working together, learning and adjusting to our situation. Soon thereafter, a member of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church in Nanty

Glo donated a small building to warehouse and store the food, which is still in operation. But it was not possible to distribute food each month from this building.

It was decided that the distribution would be best completed out of three churches on a rotating basis — St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Pike Brethren Church and St. John Vianney Roman Catholic Church. More than a dozen churches provided volunteers and provided financial support.

Within the first year, the ICEP became the largest food pantry in Cambria County, a designation it still holds. Month after month, year after year, we have been surprised and stunned by the blessings bestowed upon us by the Lord. This is an all-volunteer organization.

**(See FOOD 2, Page 10)**

# FOOD 2

*(Continued from Page 9)*

There is no paid staff. The people who volunteer from so many churches work so well together. Some months we have had more than 50 volunteers at the distribution, serving those in need.

The ICFP has also expanded to provide a food backpack program at a local school to send food home for students in need. Sixty-seven backpacks of food are sent home weekly. The COVID pandemic presented unique challenges. We went from being a walk-in pantry to a drive-thru pantry. And the pantry did very well — we never missed a month during the pandemic. In the month of March this year, we served 178 families, and distributed more than 12,600 pounds of food. The Lord provides.

We have three challenges facing us right now. First, the cost of food continues to rise. We have seen increases of more than 100% on some items, especially protein items such as ground beef and chicken.

Second, we have had to be creative and work harder to source the food items we need. We have done some forward-purchasing to lock in favorable supply and reasonable prices. Even so, dairy items, fresh fruit and produce are not always available at a price we can afford.

The food pantry continues to grow, and that brings us to the third major challenge. Late last year, the board of directors started discussing how successful we have been during the last eight years, and asked the question, "How can

we sustain this pantry for the next 20 years or more?" We prayed and decided to look to consolidate warehousing and distribution at one location. A building has become available to lease in the community that is double the size of our current warehouse. We would be able to warehouse and distribute monthly from this one central location. Our challenge once we finalize the lease is to upgrade the facility, install a new furnace, install a new walk-in freezer and modify the building to be able to distribute food as quickly and as safely as possible. We anticipate this upgrade to cost somewhere between \$30,000 and \$40,000. We will be seeking grant money and look to other sources to raise the money needed. We hope and pray to be in our new location in the fall of 2022. We trust that the Lord will provide.

If you would like to get involved in this ministry, or would like to know more, contact me, Pastor Kevin McNamara, at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 814-322-1307, or call the Pantry Manager, Dave Rager, at 814-243-8184.

Financial donations are always helpful. You can also come and help out at a food distribution to see us in action. We distribute on the fourth Saturday of every month. We are also on Facebook. Search for us on Facebook at, "Interfaith Community Food Pantry." We feel blessed that the ICFP has survived and thrived during the years. We pray for God's blessings that the ICFP will continue to serve our community for many years to come. †



# Program Helps Older Adults Stay at Home

*(Editor's note: This information was submitted by Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries.)*

ALSM at Home, Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries' in-home care program, provides personal care and companion services.

ALSM at Home allows individuals more freedom in selecting how, when and where to receive assistance. The team works to create a plan and schedule that meets your needs. ALSM at Home can assist with:

- Personal care (bathing, grooming, dressing, etc.)
- Meal preparation
- Housekeeping
- Medication reminders
- Laundry
- Errand service (for example, purchasing groceries or household items)
- Companionship
- Socialization (for example, playing a game of cards together or taking a walk)

One of the many lives touched by ALSM is Margaret Coleman, a cottage resident, and ALSM at Home participant.

Margaret is "aging her way" in her cottage at Blairmont Commons on the campus of The Lutheran Home at Hollidaysburg. She moved into the cottage four years ago and she has been receiving in-home care services through ALSM at Home for the past three years.

"I am doing better living in the cottage than living in my home," she said.

Margaret's cottage is filled with some of her favorite things, such as her piano and organ. She doesn't play much anymore due to an injury suffered while playing the



*Submitted photos*

## **Margaret Coleman.**

organ at a local church.

"I have had many surgeries as a result of the injury. I even spent 47 days in The Lutheran Home receiving therapy and recovering," she said. "I like having ALSM at Home visit me. Tracy visits five days each week for one hour a day. You can get a lot done in one hour. She assists me with any personal care needs I may have, helps with dishes, laundry and mopping the floor, and even accompanies me on walks around my neighborhood. I also have meals delivered from The Lutheran Home for dinner. I like having that service. The food is good. I am widowed and my children live out of the area. I do not want to move to where they live. This is my home and where I want to be." Fay Stevanus is an ALSM at Home program participant. His story is similar to many older adults who want to continue living at home yet need a helping hand.

For the past three years, Fay, a widowed veteran, has received the services of ALSM at Home.

**(See HOME , Page 12)**

# HOME

*(Continued from Page 11)*

The staff members visit him twice a week, staying three hours each visit.

"I highly recommend them. Everything they do is terrific," Fay said.

"I had another group before ALSM at Home and I asked them to stop visiting. It was always someone new coming to my home. With ALSM, I have Tina and Rita who visit me each week. They know exactly what needs to be done and they get right to it!"

The team helps Fay maintain his independence in his home.

"I cannot keep my house going without them. They clean, do laundry, fix me a bite to eat, among other things," he said.

"I look forward to their visits. They are like family to me, like daughters.

"I have bad knees and hips and elbows from years spent on my favorite pastime."

He was Altoona's beloved "Snow Cone Man" for more than 30 years.

Prior to retiring from PPG, he spent four hours nightly in the summer delivering smiles to as many children as possible.

In retirement, he spent nine hours a day in his Jeep driving three routes, providing joy and frozen treats.

"I enjoyed it and continued until it took its toll on my body. Crushing ice is hard on your

shoulders, back and legs. I have always believed in supporting the youth in my community, either as a youth counselor or the Snow Cone Man."

ALSM at Home is available in Blair, Cambria and Somerset counties.

For more information on ALSM at Home, call 814-696-4568, or 855.280.2576. †



ALLEGHENY LUTHERAN  
SOCIAL MINISTRIES

*We Touch Lives*

25<sup>th</sup> Annual ALSM/First Commonwealth Bank  
James V. Meadows Memorial Golf Outing

**Monday, July 25, 2022**  
**Scotch Valley Country Club**

Proceeds Benefit ALSM Benevolent Care Fund

**Participate and you will enjoy:**

- A hole-in-one chance to win \$10,000
- A \$5,000 Putting Contest
- Giveaway items and refreshments
- Lunch & Dinner
- Prizes awarded for top teams and skill competitions
- A mulligan drawing for prizes

**Contact 814.696.4516 or [andrea.schurr@alsm.org](mailto:andrea.schurr@alsm.org)  
for registration information.**





# SAVE THE DATES

## UPCOMING SYNOD EVENTS

### **Youth Day at Kennywood**

*Friday, July 1*

Seventh-12th graders with leaders and chaperones (families welcome)

### **Synod-wide Service of Holy Communion**

*3 p.m. Sunday, July 24, Zion in Hollidaysburg*

With the Rite of Installation for Pastor Kevin Shock, assistant to the bishop

### **Synod Day at DelGrosso's Amusement Park**

*11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday, Aug. 1*

\$21.95/person - All ages, young to young-at-heart are welcome to join us for a day of fun at the park with an afternoon worship service.

### **Synod Day at the Curve**

*Sunday, Aug. 21*

Game starts at 6 p.m. - Tailgate beforehand at the Synod Office - \$7/ticket - Registration available soon

### **Synod-wide day of learning, fellowship and worship**

*10 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 24*

Location to be determined



**Allegheny Synod**

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

# HARDING

*(Continued from Page 6)*

A particular one involves a parishioner who called her, crying and scared about something that happened to them.

"We then (had) been able to pray together for peace and to always share that the Holy Spirit will never leave us or forsake us. Christ walks with us during times of trouble or conflict," she said about the way she helped the person through the tough time.

Harding's daughter, Dr. Kelly McAdams, followed her mother into the medical field. She is the associate dean of nursing for Pasco-Hernando State College, New Port Richey, Florida. Harding has two "fur buddies," both are rescued cats, Lacy and Nala.

"I love to read mysteries and crocheting," she said about her hobbies.

## FAITH MATTERS

**THE LUTHERAN LETTER:** What have you been praying for lately?

**CAROL HARDING:** I thank God for all of my blessings and all that He has done for me in my life. I pray for us as a nation to follow Christ's greatest commandment that we all love and care for one another and that we no longer hate, but try to understand each other for we have all been made in God's image. I pray that we become much slower to anger, that we take time to listen to each other and that we find some common ground for reasonable discussion.

**TLL:** What's your first memory of experiencing the Lutheran faith?

**CH:** I have always been a Lutheran. I guess my first memories of friends and fellowship would have been formed in Sunday school and then in Luther League. Many of my church family have been friends for over 70 years!

**TLL:** What message would you give to someone considering attending a Lutheran church?

**CH:** Christ is the center of our church. We are a friendly, inclusive and welcoming church for everyone, though we are all sinners. We trust in God, not knowing if our actions will produce the best results, but we trust in God's forgiveness if we have done wrong. We try in all ways possible to care for those who suffer from hunger, poverty or oppression. We know the Bible is our Living Word and as such we are a reforming church. We know that in our Baptism we became children of God. We were marked with the Cross forever. We join the crucified Christ in his solidarity with the pain of the world. All are welcome at the Lord's Table for communion. †



# ICYMI: SYNOD NEWS

*Bishop Paula Schmitt and Pastor Kevin Shock, assistant to the bishop, visited these congregations in recent weeks. Photos are from the Allehgeny Synod Facebook page.*



**St. Paul's, Pine Grove Mills**



**Mt. Zion, Glasgow**



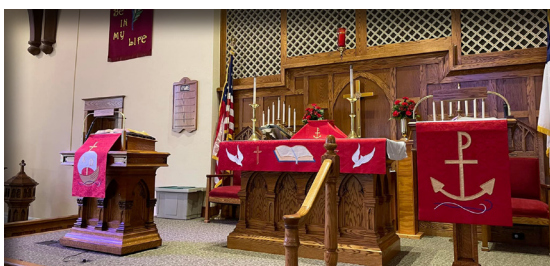
**Olanta Lutheran**



**Grace Lutheran, Johnstown**



**St. Paul's, East Freedom**



**Trinity Lutheran, Altoona**

# Noon Along Vine Street to be Filled with Music

BY GEORGE FATTMAN

*First Lutheran Church, Johnstown*

A Johnstown native will return to open the Tuesday Noon Recital Series July 5 at First Lutheran Church, located along Vine Street in Johnstown.

Patricia Reavel, who now lives in Erie, will play the piano and sing a program of all-time favorites.

"It gives me great joy to be able to share my favorite music genre — popular piano and vocal music spanning five decades — with the good people of Johnstown," she said.

Reavel grew up here and took her first lessons from her mother, Jean, who is a consultant to the noon recital series.

Patricia took voice lessons from the late Lucille Ringler and eventually earned a piano performance degree from the Philadelphia University of the Arts, then a master's from the Eastman School of Music, Rochester, New York.

For 30 years she lived in Pittsburgh and conducted a ministry of singing and playing in many nursing homes throughout Western Pennsylvania. The recitals are free. They are supported by contributions and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. Prior to the COVID pandemic a light sit-down lunch was served after each recital. Lunches will resume with the July 12 program.

Other performances are:

- July 12 - Johnstown Brassworks,

is a quintet of music teachers who perform throughout the region and play an annual concert at the Grand Halle along Broad Street. Sometimes their students join them in performing. During COVID, members played remotely and edited their performance so that they seemed to be playing as a group. These performances were online.

- July 19 - Andrea Blough, soprano, just returned to Somerset County after several years of teaching at the Taipei American School in Taiwan. Her program will comprise art songs and arias. Before moving to Taiwan, she was a professional singer and was also the choir master for the Asheville, North Carolina, Lyric Opera. She has performed at Carnegie Hall in New York, the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia and the Lincoln Center with the New York Philharmonic and the Westminster Symphonic Choir.
- July 26 - Chaz Bowers, organist, teaches organ and improvisation at Seton Hill University in Greensburg, where he also is the coordinator of sacred music. He has performed throughout the Pittsburgh region, including Heinz Chapel and the basilica of St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe. He also has performed in Bermuda and at Notre Dame and other churches in Paris. †



# The Director's Take

*News of Note from the Director of Evangelical Mission*

By **PASTOR KEVIN SHOCK**

*Assistant to the Bishop & Director of Evangelical Mission*

Lately I have been thinking about what it means to be a welcoming church.

In the summer months, especially since the threat of COVID-19 has lessened in many places, people often travel. That means that you may be visiting a new congregation in a vacation spot, or you may be seeing new visitors to your own congregation. During the Memorial Day weekend I visited one of my favorite congregations, All Saints Episcopal Church in Cincinnati.

The people of All Saints are skilled at extending a welcome without being overwhelming. Everyone, regardless of how long they have been attending, writes a name tag for themselves just inside the sanctuary. It's nice to be called by name and to call other people by their names. They also like to engage people in conversation without asking personal questions. No "who are you?!" or "where are you from?" It's more along the lines of "nice to see you this morning" and "would you like a cup of coffee?" I'm sure there are ways they could be more welcoming; for example, their building isn't obviously accessible, and no one offered to assist me with the hymnal. Still, for a churchy person like myself, this congregation is a warm and welcoming place to visit.



**Pastor Kevin Shock**

In contrast to that, I once visited an ELCA congregation in a small Midwestern town where my friends live. The architecture was beautiful, and the organ was a small, but magnificent piece of hand-built art. The thing I remember most, however, is that not one person greeted me until after the service, and then it was only to comment on my singing voice. That made me wonder whether I was singing too loudly. What really solidified the conviction that I would never return to that congregation is that my friends later heard through the small town grapevine about the stranger at the Lutheran church who knew the whole liturgy and had a great singing voice. The community was talking about me instead of talking to me.

When you enter an unfamiliar congregation, even if you are familiar with church, there's a lot you don't know. You don't know where the bathrooms are, whether children stay in worship or go somewhere else, what the communion schedule is, which liturgy setting or hymnal is used or if you are sitting in someone else's seat. You could probably think of a dozen more things you don't know.

**(See DEM, Page 22)**

# A Report from Lion Country

*(Editor's note: Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America presence on campus in the territory of the Allegheny Synod. We asked Deacon Alicia Anderson, who serves as campus minister, for some updates this summer.)*

**BY DEACON ALICIA ANDERSON**

*Penn State University*

While campus life is not back to pre-COVID “normal,” we have been able to return to gathering in ways that feel similar to life before the pandemic. Masks have come and gone with different levels of community spread, but this year Lutheran Campus Ministry has been able to gather for evening prayer mid-week on campus (and even share dinner afterward), worship with the Sunday morning community at Grace Lutheran in State College and resume our shared worship service on Sunday evenings.

The usual challenges of college life continue for our students: academic demands, changing majors, sorting out priorities, identity, relationships, growing into an understanding of God that is more in line with the mindset and issues of the young adult years. Alongside all these, students seem to be taking the ever-changing restrictions and adjustments of COVID-19 precautions in stride. They are more

grateful than ever to connect with a community that welcomes them, to find people of faith who listen and support each other, to discuss and raise questions while growing as people of faith.

Students also consider how following Jesus will shape the way they interact with others in classes, residence halls, relationships, as well as their personal and professional life in years ahead.

It seems that students are engaging in deeper questions as we’ve emerged from COVID-19 isolation. Perhaps there was more space for reflection as people were kept apart. Racial issues, social issues and political conflicts are on their minds, and the need to find safe spaces for conversation about these and other challenging issues is even more important. Students are looking for meaning in their lives and are eager to discover how the love and welcome of God can shape their lives moving forward.

Gathering as a community of faith has been a significant blessing through the past two years. Students have weathered a great deal of change and have missed a variety of opportunities that are typically part of the transition from high school to college and into their young adult years.

**(See COLLEGE, Page 19)**





*Submitted photo*

**Deacon Alicia Anderson, second from left, with some friends from Penn State.**

## COLLEGE

*(Continued from Page 18)*

They are open about their need for prayer around issues of life direction, concern for family members who are ill and relationships that are both a joy and a struggle. They regularly pray for the healing of creation, communities struggling with violence or injustice and political struggles.

They recognize the need to take care of themselves, even if they are not sure just how to accomplish it.

Students are eager to discover more about the faith, to learn stories and teachings that they haven't retained or haven't heard in childhood.

They bring a freshness and a hopefulness to the task of learning and

growing and discovering just how God is shaping them for what is ahead.

They also laugh easily and are clearly grateful when their peers and people older than they are, are truly listening to them.

Lutheran Campus Ministry is deeply grateful for your prayers, your direct contributions, your mission support dollars and the students you send us.

The partnership we share in caring for students and being God's presence on the university campus is invaluable and truly makes a difference in the lives of students and the campus community.

Thank you for your care for our students and our ministry. †



# Sabbatical Report Part 1:

## *Scotland - Holy Isle and Highland Hiking*

*(Editor's note: This is the first part in an ongoing series by Pastor Julie Holm about her three-month journey around the world investigating unique locations and faith.)*

**BY PASTOR JULIE HOLM**

*Brush Valley Fusion of Faith*

I must have really wanted to go to Iona, because I spent 10 days in isolation, and took at least six COVID tests to get there.

When my sabbatical was first planned, for a May 2020 start, my last week was on Iona in Scotland. I'd registered for a retreat there with the Wild Goose Worship Group, the liturgy and music arm of the Iona Community. In 2022 when it was possible to re-plan the journey, I knew I was leaving in mid-July. So the Iona retreat and pilgrimage moved to the beginning.

I had to spend 10 days, in isolation, in Edinburgh. Because of the timing of flights and ferries, I ended up with about six days between my isolation and the retreat. Church history was a major part of my sabbatical, so I visited Edinburgh and St. Andrews to explore the history of the Protestant reformation in Scotland, which influenced the Calvinist roots of the United Church of Christ, one of my church's denominations. The courage of martyrs burned at the stake in the college town, and the resolve and the of John Knox impressed me deeply.

**(See JOURNEY, Page 23)**



*Photos by Pastor Julie Holm*  
**The interior of Iona Abbey during evening prayer.**



*Photos by Pastor Julie Holm*  
**Iona Abbey after the final evening worship of the week, candlelit.**



# BISHOP 1

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*(Continued from Page 2)*

Some of what I shared with the Assembly was the observation that we are in a rebuilding phase in our Synod. As we continue to emerge from the pandemic, we are becoming acutely aware that the church is a very different place than it was just two or three years ago. The pandemic had a force similar to a tornado hitting a small town. Some structures were left untouched or unphased, some were damaged, but salvageable, and others were completely leveled.

Now, we are faced with having to rebuild some parts of our ministry together. There is no real blueprint to follow because when something is broken apart, it doesn't go back together in the same way. That can be challenging because we want the old pieces to fit together in the same way they did before the pandemic. But, they're not going to be the same. You've probably heard that more often than you'd like to have heard it lately. Starting over or figuring out how to salvage what we have and rebuild it into something new can be a scary thought because often it means that something will change. Humans are not fond of change. We often fear change—even good change -- because of what it will mean for us. I've been asking the question, "What if we don't change?" What will it mean for the future of our congregations, communities and Synod if we aren't open to changes that could help sustain us into the future?

I have been asked about my vision for

our Synod. It would be nice to have a sentence or two that named exactly where we are going and was wrapped up in a neat little package; but before we figure out a plan with action steps, we have to re-build. We need to rebuild trust and rebuild relationships. We need to re-learn how to live together well as Lutherans on the territory of the Allegheny Synod. My vision is a strong, healthy community of faith committed to each other and to Christ's mission.

We already have a strong, enduring foundation on which to embark on this rebuilding project: the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. That foundation will hold us up even if the structure we start rebuilding is a little wobbly at first. I believe part of my work in these next years with you is to rebuild trust and encourage us toward love and healing. I will walk alongside you. I might open some wounds that you would rather have stay covered over. I will do that because I love you and I believe part of the Holy Spirit's call to this office for me is to be the one who rips off the Band-Aid and helps us heal.

No matter what effect the pandemic has had on your congregation or community, we are entering a rebuilding process. It won't happen overnight and thanks be to God, rebuilding is a group project. Along with Pastor Kevin and Michelle, you will be a part of this rebuilding project because God has given you the tools to participate in this project and give it life.

**(See BISHOP 2, Page 22)**

**DEM***(Continued from Page 17)*

Why, then, can we be so hesitant to approach someone unfamiliar in our own congregations?

They may have even more questions or be even less familiar with worship than we are.

The advice given in Hebrews 13:1-2 is helpful when strangers visit our congregations: "Let mutual affection continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it."

Verse 3, however, is where the rubber hits the road: "Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them, those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured."

Instead of planting yourself firmly in "your" pew, put yourself in the place of the one who is visiting.

- Help one who doesn't recognize the pew hymnal as though you don't recognize the pew hymnal.

- Create a space for people with mobility issues as though you yourself

have mobility issues.

- Approach a person who has never been to church as though you have never been to church.

- Treat someone who has been hurt by the church as though you have been hurt by the church.

Most importantly, remember that the person or family who visits your congregation is not a potential choir member or Sunday School teacher or nursery attendant or council member. They are beloved children of God who are seeking God for a reason you do not yet know or understand.

Let your assumptions about them be good and humble and holy.

Welcome them as Jesus would welcome a stranger, and they will find the God for whom they search.

If you are looking for some tips on becoming a more hospitable congregation or could use some questions to consider, visit <https://www.elca.org/Resources/Evangelism>.

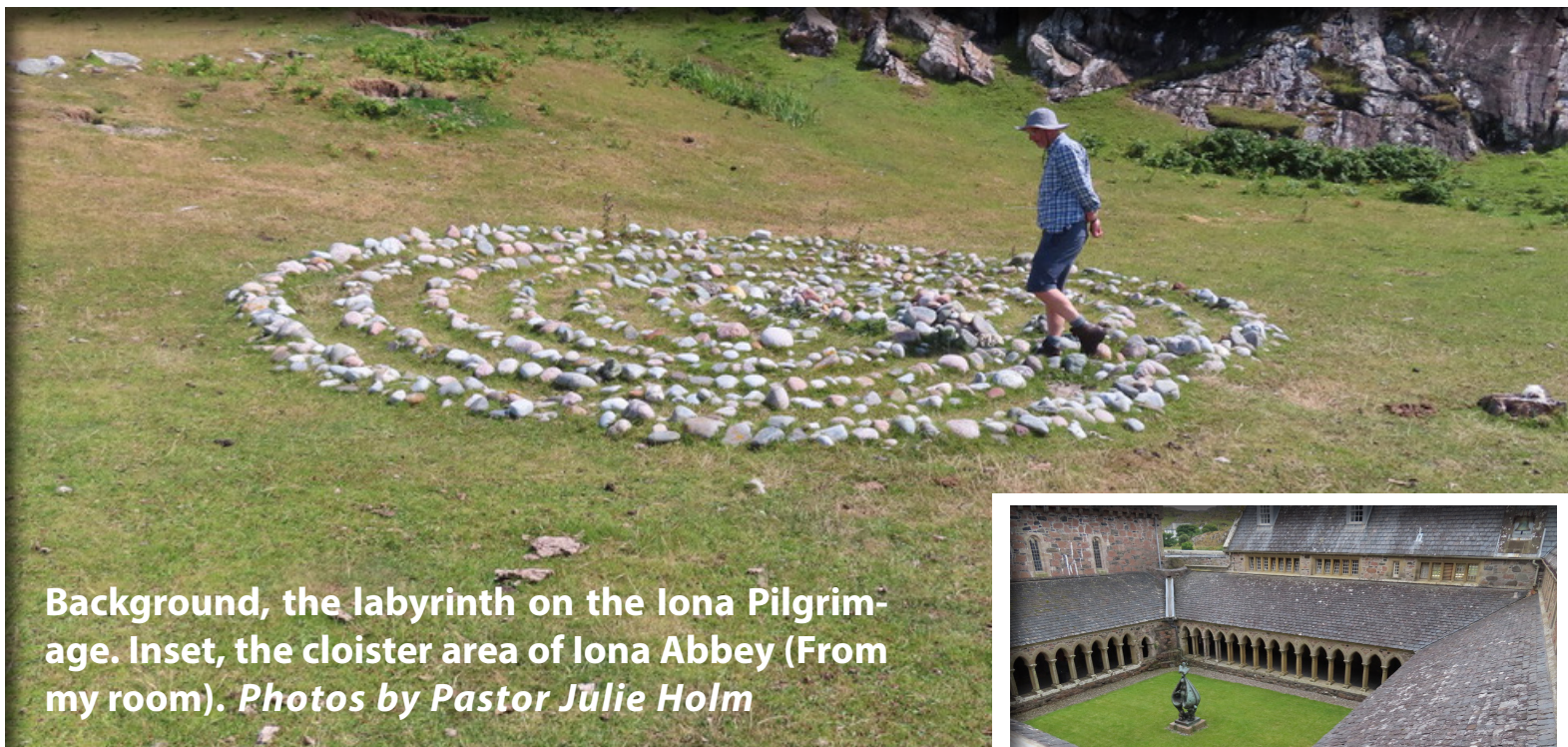
Take particular notice of the "Hospitality Matters" and "Welcome the Children" documents. †

**BISHOP 2***(Continued from Page 21)*

I invite you to begin praying now about how your gifts can contribute to this rebuilding project.

The foundation on which we build is Christ Jesus: our strong rock. No force of nature or pandemic has the power to change Christ's love for us and presence with us. I pray you will continue to allow the love of God in Christ Jesus to consume you and guide you toward each other so that together we rebuild communities of care because with Christ as our foundation, anything is possible.

**+ Bishop Paula**



Background, the labyrinth on the Iona Pilgrimage. Inset, the cloister area of Iona Abbey (From my room). *Photos by Pastor Julie Holm*

## JOURNEY

*(Continued from Page 20)*

I spent a few days in the Highlands, getting my hiking legs back under me after the isolation. Then, on to the sea and Iona.

Iona is the Holy Isle, and in Celtic spirituality one of the thin places in the world, where heaven and earth come close. It was founded in 563 by St. Columba, who escaped Ireland and brought Christianity here and to Inverness in the highlands. It has been the home of a community of some sort ever since. The Iona Community inhabits the Iona Abbey, which is an ancient stone church and monastery grounds. In the church you can feel the ancient character of the place — ferns grow on the stones inside the Abbey, candles light evening services and Iona marble carved medieval altar and baptismal font sit at opposite ends of the long, narrow space. Through a side door you can enter

the monastery area, where today guests are housed in brand new rooms.

The great joy of Iona was the pattern of the day. We followed a monastic schedule, with two communal meals (distanced) in the refectory, a bag lunch, morning and evening services, one or two program sessions each day and a lot of time just to wander, be and drink in the peace. I loved sitting together in the beautiful Abbey and enjoying evening prayer as the sun set, hiking all over the island on a pilgrimage that traced the history of the community on Iona, and sitting along the beach, just being alone with my God. While the tourist sites on Iona can be visited in half a day, a week surrounded by sacred music, image and contemplation was a great way to tune my senses for the next three months, as I set out on my walk with my God. †



# BEFORE *you* GO

## Perils and Pitfalls of Planting

On Memorial Day weekend we typically plant our garden.

A couple years ago I made a raised-bed garden to try to control tomato blight, which to some degree has worked.

The soil, to this point, has remained unspoiled.

But numerous other factors contribute to a complicated garden. Watering is particularly troublesome.

Do yellowish, wilted leaves indicate plants that need more water?

How can that be the case when the soil is moist?

Perhaps we are over-watering?

Many minutes are spent each night standing, staring at the plants and pondering their existence.

It can be very difficult to grow and harvest a crop. Each plant is unique. Each one has specific circumstances required to raise them to their potential.

Too much sunlight, and they will wither. Too little, and they will suffer a similar fate.

If bad elements influence the soil around the plants, they can be corrupted and the vegetables and fruits will spoil on the vine.

Those results can be very hard to stomach after spending a lot of time tending the garden.

The process might not be all that different from parenting. I am not speaking from experience here, just observation -- and I don't mean to compare kids to tomatoes and cucumbers.

But for anything to grow and prosper, it takes love and care, time and patience.

I can become frustrated with less than a dozen plants. And there's not a lot at stake with the backyard garden, which typically ends up OK in the end.

Imagine what this process must be like for God, looking down on all of us.

-- Rick Kazmer, editor

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