



Allegheny Synod  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

# *God is Doing a New Thing!*

**REPORTS OF  
SYNOD CONFERENCES**

# Report of the Bedford Conference

Rev. Kathy Popp

**The St. Clairsville Lutheran Parish** is comprised of **St. Peter's Lutheran Church Osterburg** and **Messiah Lutheran Church Bedford**. They are served by the **Rev. David Wright**. The two congregations enjoy a close relationship and do a number of things jointly such as midweek Lenten services, several joint Worship services throughout the year, and a joint Outdoor Worship and picnic in August.

From September through March, joint Soup Socials are held on a monthly basis with the congregations taking turns hosting them. Offerings received at the Soup Socials are designated for various outreach opportunities in the community. These have included the Bedford County Humane Society, Abby's Angels, the Parish's Outreach Fund, and Lutheran Disaster Response. Both congregations participate in a Secret Santa program through Bedford County Children and Youth. In Spring and Fall, St. Peter's hosts cornhole tournaments. St. Peter's Women's Group coordinates an annual "Indie Sunday" or "Sweats for Vets" where items are collected for the Veterans Home in Hollidaysburg. On a rotating three year basis, the Women's Group also conducts a new and gently worn shoe drive for Funds2Orgs. Beginning at the Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper and through Easter, St. Peter's "sells" various farm animals through the ELCA Good Gifts. Twice each year, St. Peter's Women bake pies for the monthly birthday parties at Pennknoll Village nursing home. They also contribute for Christmas gifts for the residents.

**Zion Lutheran Church in Everett** holds an 11AM service every Sunday led by **Rev. Kathy Popp**. Every second Sunday of the month an Open Door Service is also offered at 9:30AM. This service is somewhat shorter and a combination of traditional and contemporary liturgy and music. Two weekly Bible Studies are offered, an evening one and a morning one. Bible Studies are attended by a mixture of people from a variety of denominations. Members provide a Bingo afternoon for the Personal Care Home in Everett multiple times of the year. Plenty of laughter and warmth are shared by all.

The congregation selected an ELCA church in the urban part of Johnstown where the needs of the local youth in the community are most evident. Five hundred dollars is yearly budgeted to provide church-led activities, materials, and transportation for these youth who are less fortunate. Zion members feel that this has been a privilege to participate as a partner with them in this project.

The congregation is pleased that 4 individuals have been accepted to participate in the Authorized Lay Worship Leadership program under the Go Tell It IN the Mountain Grant.

Two registered nurses in the congregation have recently completed certification in their Faith Community Nursing from West Virginia State University and are actively engaged in creating a non-profit local ministry to bring local churches together and offer these newly honed skills throughout the Everett-Bedford communities with health clinics and presentations.

**Mount Olive Lutheran Church in Buffalo Mills**, services are led by congregation members. Mt. Olive Lutheran Church is located along Dividing Ridge Road, Fairhope in Somerset County. On September 8, 2024, they recognized their 200th year of ministry. Mount Olive is a small country church with attendance averaging 15-25 members per Sunday. Some Sundays the congregation plays bells as part of our worship service, enjoyed by all.

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Rev. Kathy Popp

Other church activities include: monthly Coffee and Conversation, Ice Cream and Dessert Social, a summer picnic at Shawnee State Park, a picnic with dessert auction in our own pavilion, a fall harvest party and a Thanksgiving Fellowship Luncheon with a silent auction. Although a small congregation in numbers, they still see the importance of serving neighbors. Some of the projects they support are: Breezewood Trucker and Traveler Ministry - weekly, ELCA Good Gifts during the Advent season, Somerset Intouch Hospice, S.A.M. Van, flowers for the shut in, donations to ELCA World Hunger, Blanket Sunday and Harvest Home, backpack school kits, money for local families in need, Christmas Coat Project and they support two girls through Children's International. If you are interested, come and worship with us. Sunday School begins at 9AM and Church worship service begins at 10AM. Who knows you might pick a Sunday that they are playing bells and you can join in the fun!

**Christ Lutheran Church of Madley** holds worship service every Sunday at :00 am. Sunday school during the school year begins at 9:45. Worship service is led by **Aaron Browning** and Communion is given on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Sundays of the month. They have done multiple food drives for the Hyndman food bank and have started making monthly donations to local outreach initiatives within the county in addition to just sending it to the synod. They hold Vacation Bible School. Members have prepared and served 2 meals at the Mission homeless shelter in Cumberland MD and in process of planning to do it again. They have recently had a baptism, 2 members confirmed, and 3 new members join their church this year. Aaron Browning is also currently taking classes with the Go Tell It In The Mountains initiative to become a ALWL. They have two members who have been trained in home communion and who have been visiting shut ins and members of the community who do not attend church.

**Mount Zion Lutheran Church in Breezewood** holds worship services every Sunday at 9 a.m. led by **Rev. Judy Simonson**. It is one of only two congregations remaining in the town of Breezewood. The congregation cooperates with the 6nited Methodist Church. They worshipped at Mt. Zion for a time when they were locked out of their building when the congregation split. Mt. Zion's main ministry is done by supporting the Breezewood Trucker or Traveler ministry. In addition to monetary support, a member of the congregation serves on the board of directors. In past years that was done by member **Vera Wilt**. The present vacancy pastor, **Judith Simonson**, is now serving a second term on the board. The congregation also gives financial support to the synod on a regular basis.

Respectfully submitted by Rev. Kathy Popp  
Dean of the Bedford Conference

# Report of the Blair-Huntingdon Conference

Rev. Marty Jo Irvin-Stellabotte

The Blair-Huntingdon Conference consists of 25 churches in Blair and Huntingdon Counties in the Allegheny Synod, with 19 of these functioning as single-point parishes and six as part of two-point parishes. Because a number of these congregations are vacant, the seven full-time clergy in our conference serve in their respective ministries and as vacancy pastors at other churches in our conference.

Our conference is also fortunate to be served by the leadership and support from retired clergy, part-time clergy, and authorized lay worship leaders. With their help, these vacant congregations are still able to worship and receive Holy Communion.

Our current and retired clergy gathered regularly for coffee and conversation during the year as we enjoyed fellowship and sharing updates at area coffee shops throughout our region. We also met most months at different locations for prayer, reflection, support, and sharing news from the synod and from our respective ministries.

A few highlights from this past year include:

-This past year, we bid farewell to the Rev. Dr. Barry Folmar, who retired from full-time ministry at First Lutheran, Altoona. He is currently residing in the region of the Clearfield conference and occasionally supply preaching.

-As of this writing, Bethany Lutheran, Altoona, and First, Altoona, both have begun the call process in seeking their next pastor, with both vacancies posted to the ELCA website.

-Bethany, Altoona, is in conversation with St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Altoona, on shared ministry opportunities. They are excited for how the Holy Spirit is moving!

-Our conference was pleased to once again partner with Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries for the Halloween party for residents at the Lutheran Home at Hollidaysburg. This is a fun annual event for our youth and the residents to enjoy refreshments, music, games and laughs together.

-Several of our congregations also partnered with the Lutheran Home during the Christmas season for their Angel Tree project. Congregations "adopt" residents who list their holiday gift wishes on an angel tag for individuals to purchase and wrap.

-We are thankful to Trinity Lutheran, Altoona, for their hospitality in hosting the Bishop's Chrism Mass and vow renewal this year for rostered leaders, candidates, and authorized lay worship leaders.

After Synod Assembly, our conference will be gearing up for two major events -- we hope you'll join us! We are once again hosting **Lutheran Day at the Curve on Sunday, August 16**, at PNG Field in Altoona – come enjoy food, fun and fellowship at the ballpark. And The Weekend is back this year -- St. James Lutheran, Huntingdon, will once again host the **junior/senior high youth retreat December 11-13**. Watch for more details on both events at Synod Assembly.

I am grateful to serve as Dean of the conference and am thankful for the support received throughout our conference and synod.

Respectfully submitted,

The Rev. Marty Jo Irvin-Stellabotte, Dean  
Pastor, Geeseytown-Newry Lutheran Parish

# Report of the Clearfield Conference

Rev. Vicki Beilfuss

Sadly, last October, Pastor Jaime Olson died from pancreatic cancer, he is missed greatly by many. His death left First Faith United Cooperative (Philipsburg & Houtzdale) without pastoral leadership. Rev. Bob Way and Authorized Lay Worship Leader Ben Hoffman are sharing worship leadership. Pastor Way is giving guidance to their councils as needed.

St. John, Clearfield has formally called Rev. Mary Jo Bruinooge to a four-year term as their interim pastor.

Holy Trinity, Lanse and Shepherd of the Hills, Karthaus (served by Rev. Vicki Beilfuss), and Grace, Curwensville (served by retired Chaplain the Rev. Ed Roberts) have voted to form a new coalition. Articles of agreement were signed April 29, 2026 for "Abiding Faith Lutheran Coalition." It will be a process for the coming months to put everything in place. Councils have decided to intentionally take time to fellowship together, in order to foster friendships and new working relationships.

Pastor Vicki Beilfuss is planning to retire next year.

We look forward to forging new relationships and working together as we serve our communities in this place.

Respectfully submitted,  
The Rev. Vicki Beilfuss  
Clearfield Conference Dean

# Report of the Johnstown Conference

Rev. Nancy L. Hoover

The Johnstown Conference clergy and vicars meet on the second Thursday of each month to discuss our ministries and to share information about upcoming events. These meetings are times of good conversation among colleagues.

Much ministry has been happening in our Conference, and the following information was reported:

- Many and varied worship opportunities, including regular Sunday worship with Holy Communion, midweek services with Holy Communion and Healing, midweek Lenten Services and Holy Week services, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services with Holy Communion, and Ascension Day services.
- Adult Faith Formation classes, Children and Youth Faith Formation classes, Catechism classes, Confirmation classes, new member classes, Vacation Bible School, and a variety of educational programs for all age groups.
- Multiple Church Council meetings and meetings of various committees working together in the life of the Church.
- Various upgrades and repairs to the buildings.
- Creation of the *Living Waters Lutheran Parish* with sharing between Moxham Lutheran Church and Christ Lutheran Church.
- Monthly Conference meetings.
- Multiple Food Pantries and other sharing projects of clothing and household items, with outreach to neighborhoods.
- Baptisms, Weddings, Confirmations, and Funerals in many congregations.

Our congregations and leaders:

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|---|-------------------------------|
| • First Lutheran Church                     | Pastor Christy Harford        |
| • Good Shepherd Lutheran Church             | Vicar Penny Koontz            |
| • Grace Lutheran Church                     | Pastor Nancy Hoover           |
| • Living Waters Lutheran Parish             | Pastor James West             |
| • Mount Calvary Lutheran Church             | Vacant                        |
| • St. David Lutheran Church                 | Pastor Mark Fischer (interim) |
| • St. Paul's Mundy's Corner Lutheran Church | Vicar Jennifer Bobolsky       |
| • St. John Summerhill Lutheran Churches     | Vicar Jennifer Bobolsky       |
| • Trinity Lutheran Church, Sidman           | Vicar Claudia Plows           |
| • Zion Lutheran Church                      | Pastor Michael VanDyke        |

In December of 2025, Pastor Rebecca West joined the Saints Triumphant. She was Pastor of Moxham and Christ Lutheran Churches, later *Living Waters Lutheran Parish*, which she helped to form. Her loss was grieved by our whole conference, and we give thanks for her ministry among us.

Thanks be to God for the many blessings the Johnstown Conference churches have shared in the past year. May we continue to serve our members and our communities as we follow the call of Jesus to follow him with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the peace of God that passes all understanding.

The Rev. Nancy L. Hoover  
Dean, Johnstown Conference

# Report of the Laurel Highlands Conference

Rev. Tyler Graham

In the time since our last Assembly of the Allegheny Synod, the Laurel Highlands Conference continues to rejoice in the installation of The Rev Kevin Shock as Bishop and gives thanks for his leadership and service to the Church. Though we have witnessed to the presence and movement of the Holy Spirit within our lives and this place, we affirm that there has been a marked renewal within the relationships and ministry through Christ in these few months. Being rooted in prayer, worship, and the Sacraments, the people and congregations are not just engaged, but thriving within the grace of God as we are led into a new season of the Church and life together.

Within the Laurel Highlands Conference, the grace and inspiration of God through Christ and the Holy Spirit are revealed as the Church gathers and as she serves to proclaim the Gospel in ministry of word and deed. This ministry is reflected in the routine life of the Lord's people ... the sharing of a cup of coffee or the phone call / visit made to a family member or friend, grocery shopping, the daily tasks of employment and school, the creation of worship bulletins, meetings of Council and committees, the gathering of Sunday worship, and in fellowship during mid-week Bible study, Supper Church, and youth groups.

Ministry is also reflected in the non-routine events and situations of life ... the births and deaths of loved ones, baptisms and confirmations, weddings, ordinations (The Rev Christy Harford), pastoral departures (upcoming retirement of The Rev Ruth Jensen), and community events and partnerships.

A few examples of these forms of ministry include:

- the distribution of clothing at St Mark's Lutheran (Shanksville),
- providing bedding and personal hygiene items to personal care homes through Friedens Lutheran (Friedens),
- providing care bags for those transitioning to nursing and rehabilitation facilities through the *Heart Strings* ministry of Faith Lutheran (Somerset),
- creating space and time for those living with special needs to share in the joy of Christmas gatherings and Easter celebrations (Christ Trinity Parish – Somerset / Boswell),
- partnership with St Francis Caring & Sharing (Benscreek Lutheran, Hollsopple),
- hosting of the Casselman Valley Helpers Food Pantry (Zion Lutheran, Meyersdale),
- and service trips to accompany and support those affected by crisis and disaster (Christ Trinity Parish to West Virginia and Friedens Lutheran to North Carolina and Guatemala).

Worship is the center and foundation of our life together, yet it is through the living out of our baptismal vocation within our specific callings and lives that we come to share in the fullness of life more deeply and encounter the presence of God in ways that may be unusual and unexpected, yet, simple and profound. Experiencing this truth, the people and congregations of the Laurel Highlands Conference and Allegheny Synod are blessings to our communities and the world (and blessed themselves) through the many and various ministries we share. To God be the glory!

As the people and congregations of the Laurel Highlands Conference welcomes The Rev John Barichivich as Dean and strive to live out our faith for the sake of Christ and our neighbors, we look forward to witnessing to the ongoing work of God to bring joy, peace, and new life into us and the world.

With prayers for our Lord's continuing guidance and blessings of the partnership of the Gospel and ministries of the Church, I respectfully submit this report in the Peace of Christ +

The Rev Tyler J Graham, *STS*

Dean, Laurel Highlands Conference Pastor, Living  
Waters Lutheran Parish

# Report of the Nittany Conference

Rev. David Pencek

At the Allegheny Synod's 2025 assembly, Pastor David Pencek (St. Mark Lutheran, Howard) was installed as the new dean of the Nittany Conference. Here are some of the happenings around the Nittany Conference since the 2025 assembly:

- The conference's rostered leaders met each month in person on the second Tuesday of the month.
- Pastor Steve Koths was ordained on December 13. He is serving at Shiloh Lutheran.
- The conference has several lay members who are part of the Authorized Lay Worship Leader program.
- Pastor Ted Williams (Ferguson Township Lutheran Ministry) became chair of the Hunger Team for the Allegheny Synod.
- Deacon Alicia Anderson accepted a position to be the Assistant to the Bishop for Formation. She will continue to also serve as campus minister for Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State.
- In March, rostered leaders and lay members from the conference met at the Boalsburg Fire Hall to start conversations about doing ministry together and reenvisioning what it is to be the Church in the Nittany Conference. The meeting was led by Sue Ellen Spotts, Director of Evangelical Mission for the Allegheny Synod. The first meeting was mostly about getting to know one another and hearing about how much we have in common. All who attended had a positive reaction to the meeting and wanted to continue the discussions. As of May 1, a gathering in the summer was being planned.
- On June 14, Pastor Ron Miller of Trinity Lutheran in State College will be retiring. We are so thankful for his service — and excellent cooking and the food he made for whenever Trinity hosted a meeting! We wish Pastor Ron well in his retirement!

Yours in Christ,

Pastor David Pencek

St. Mark Lutheran, Howard