

CURRENTS

Upper Susquehanna Synod News and Information

February 5, 2010

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ATTACHMENTS:

- None this month

CURRENTS is the e-newsletter of the Upper Susquehanna Synod. Please share this information with others! Edit, copy, and use this information in bulletins, newsletters, sermons, billboards, press releases, evangelism efforts, and/or spoken announcements where helpful. If you have information to include in future editions, please send an email to <news@uss-elca.org> with your name, congregation name, town, and the information.

The next edition of Currents is planned for March 5, 2010, with a publication deadline of March 1, 2010.

NEWS IN THIS ISSUE

Grant Application Deadline Approaching

Those congregations wishing to apply for a Small Church Grant or Internship Grant for Fiscal Year 2011 please send your applications to the synod office ASAP. The Small Church Committee will be reviewing applications on February 22. For more information, or to request an application and eligibility criteria, contact Pastor Karl-John Stone (<mailto:karljohn@uss-elca.org> or 570-524-9778). Applications are also available on the synod website.

February News from Camp Mount Luther

For more information on the following, please visit the camp's website at www.campmountluther.org:

- Camperson Summer Preview Parties: Each congregation in the Upper Susquehanna Synod is asked to send a representative to one of these events. The representative, called a camperson, will serve as a liaison between the congregation and the camp. New summer programs will be explained and brochures will be available. Those who attend will also get discount coupons to distribute to campers from their church! Refreshments, music, and fun will be provided! You need only attend one of the following parties: February 21 at 2:00 p.m. at St. John's Lutheran, Bloomsburg; February 28 at 2:00 p.m. at Camp Mount Luther, Mifflinburg; March 14 at 2:00 p.m. Camp Mount Luther, Mifflinburg.
- Help Wanted! Make a difference in someone's life this summer. Camp Mount Luther is in need of men and women to serve in paid and volunteer capacities this summer. Counselor positions, especially male counselors, are needed. In addition, volunteer nurses are needed to serve as the weekly health officer. Candidates must possess a commitment to Christ, a passion for adventure, and strong leadership skills. If you or someone you know is interested, contact Chad Hershberger, Executive Director, at the camp office at (570) 922-1587. Applications are available on the website at <http://www.campmountluther.org>
- Bishop's Open Golf Tournament: The fourth annual Bishop Open's Golf Tournament is set for May 10, 2010, beginning at 11:30 a.m. at the Susquehanna Valley Country Club in Shamokin Dam. A brochure containing information and registration form is available on the camp's website.

Emergency Housing for Haitian Refugees

Liberty Lutheran Services (Southeastern Penn's Affiliate of Lutheran Disaster Response) has been contacted by the state refugee coordinator with a request for emergency housing capacity for Haitian Refugees. The agency reports, "We have very few details but are trying assess interest in helping to emergency house and feed individuals. It is possible that people could be arriving as early as next week. Those wishing to assist should expect to offer this hospitality for a time period of 90 days (although this number could vary widely either way). There are many questions to be answered. Indicating your interest does not obligate you in any way."

Right now the latest best information is that Liberty Lutheran Services and related Lutheran networks and other partners, are "on call" for assisting with the housing needs of the second plane from Haiti slated for sometime in the next day or so. It is anticipated that the housing needs will be organized in the long term through the Department of Public Welfare, but in the short term agencies like Liberty are being asked to assist in the short term.

In any case, Liberty is hoping to work with communities to help meet the housing and related needs (transportation, food, communication, etc.) of around 8-10 people each. They have specifically reached out to the greater North Penn and Abington communities at this point. This approach may change though too, as they continue to get more information. The possibility of this region receiving people is becoming more of a reality.

Persons interested should contact Selma Onal, Lancaster Program Coordinator. Some persons will be going to hospitals in Harrisburg and so they would need help for their escorts or family members that are acting as their medical escorts. Selma can be reached at <mailto:selmao@lcfsinpa.org> or by phone at (717) 397-4757.

Information for Thrivent Members to Receive Matching Funds for Haiti Relief

Thrivent Financial for Lutherans has announced that it will match members' gifts to Haiti relief efforts, giving \$1 for every \$2 donated. If you are a Thrivent member:

- Make check payable to one of four organizations: Lutheran World Relief, ELCA Disaster Response, LCMS World Relief/Human Care, or WELS Committee on Relief
- Write in the Memo line of the check: "Helping Haiti"
- Mail the check to: Thrivent Financial for Lutherans, ATTN: Fraternal Service Center, 4321 N. Ballard Road, Appleton, WI 54919

If further questions, call 800-236-3736, say "Directory" when prompted and then enter extension 83003. No matching fund money can come through the synod office. They must be mailed directly to Thrivent.

Home Energy Assistance Available to Low Income Families

This information may be of interest to congregations who have or work with low-income families as we are in the grips of some really cold weather. The Pennsylvania Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps low income people pay their heating bills through home heating energy assistance grants and crisis grants. You need not have an unpaid bill to receive home heating energy assistance. You may receive this money without being in the Cash Assistance program-a family of four with an annual income of up to \$33,075 can qualify for assistance. No lien is placed on your property if you receive this help. Deadline to apply is March 15. The Department of Public Welfare may extend or shorten the program depending upon the availability of federal funds. Information on how to apply is at <http://www.dpw.state.pa.us/servicesprograms/liheap/>.

Survey on Confirmation

Allen Sasser-Goehner, Director of Youth Ministry at King of Glory Lutheran Church in Billings, MT, is working on a Master's Degree through the Youth and Family Distance Program at Luther Seminary. As part of a research project about the state of Confirmation in the ELCA, he has created some on-line surveys that he needs members of our synod to participate in. There are three links below to surveys: one for pastors/youth leaders, one for parents of youth completed confirmation (approximately in the last 10 years), and one for youth completed confirmation (in last 10 years). Your help is much appreciated.

- Pastors/Youth Leaders:
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ELCAconfirmationleaders>
- Parents of Youth Who have completed confirmation:
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ELCApostconfirmationparents>
- Youth who have completed confirmation:
<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ELCApostconfirmationyouth>

Diakon Lutheran Social Services on Facebook

Diakon now has a Facebook fan page. If you are a member of the social networking community, Facebook, you can become a fan of Diakon. To access the site, go to Diakon's home page at <http://www.diakon.org>.

Leave a Legacy for Ministry and Mission

As of January 1, 2010, the Minimum Required Distribution (MRD) from IRAs, 401(k)s, 403(k)s, and other applicable retirement plans has been reinstated. The MRD was suspended for a year (2009) as part of the Federal Government's economic recovery plan. For those who are 70 ½ and older, who must take the MRD but do not need the distribution, consider making a charitable gift either outright or deferred. By making a charitable gift, you may offset some of the income tax liability with a charitable deduction. By making a deferred gift using a Charitable Gift Annuity, you will receive a tax deduction, some tax-free income for a number of years, and annuity income. For more information about how to make charitable gifts using retirement plans or other ways to make charitable gifts, call Pr. Greg Kramer at the Lutheran Planned Giving Office at 570-374-2044 or call the ELCA Foundation, 800-638-3522, ext. 2970 or visit our website at <http://www.elca.org/fo>.

News from the Mission Investment Fund

From November 1, 2009, through April 15, 2010, purchase a new Mission Investment Fund fixed-rate IRA - and earn an extra .50% over the rate in effect at the time of purchase for the full term of the investment. All it takes is a minimum \$100 investment in a MissionTermSelect fixed-rate IRA or \$250,000 in a MissionTermSelectGrand fixed-rate IRA. When you invest in the Mission Investment Fund, you get more than a great rate. You also help build your church. We use the money you invest to make loans to ELCA congregations and related ministries for building and renovation projects. This investment is only available to individuals. For information regarding this IRA opportunity, congregational, or other types of investments please contact Pr. Mark Wimmer at 267-203-1137 or mark.wimmer@elca.org

Helping Congregations Plan for Mission

Is your council or a group of leaders within your congregation looking to focus on your congregation's vision for mission or possibilities for ministry? Hoping to review the ministries your congregation has done in the past, and decide what to retain, what to let go of, and what new directions to pursue? Think it would be a good idea to seek God's transforming power, re-connect with your community, or better understand how people perceive the ministry that happens through your congregation? Then the Upper Susquehanna Synod has a number of resources available to assist you, with the help of both synod staff, and committed laity and clergy volunteers from throughout the synod's congregations, who enjoy living their discipleship as coaches or retreat leaders. To discuss what might be the best fit for your congregation, please be in touch with Pastor Karl-John Stone, Assistant to the Bishop (karljohn@uss-elca.org), or Ms. Beth Yenchko, Director for Evangelical Mission (Eyenchko@uss-elca.org), or call them at the synod office (570) 524-9778.

UPCOMING EVENTS

VBS Workshop: February 20, 2010

Sandy Grier from Along the Way will offer a VBS Preview Workshop on February 20, 2010, from 9:30-11:30 a.m. at United Lutheran, 167 Seven Points Road, Sunbury. PLEASE RSVP by February 15th by calling (570) 220-5039 or e-mail walkalongtheway@comcast.net. When registering, list the number of people attending, your church name/address and a contact number. The workshops are free but registration is required. The workshop will feature fun in addition to getting all the information needed to decide which VBS material is best for your congregation and neighborhood. Should you need directions to the workshop, please let Sandy know.

Northern Lights Midweek Lenten Services: February 24 and March 3

The Northern Lights Lutheran Congregations (those Lutheran congregations in upper Union and Northumberland Counties) are this year sharing Midweek Lenten Services. On February 24, 2010, the service will be held at Trinity Lutheran Church, Milton. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. followed by worship at 7:00, and at 7:15 Bishop Driesen presenting the topic, "I am a Lutheran. What does this mean?" On March 3rd, the Northern Lights Lenten Midweek Services at Christ Lutheran Church, Milton. Dinner will be served at 6:30 p.m. followed by worship at 7:00.

Agape Concert: February 27, 2010

Live concert featuring Agape (David Scherer) will be held on Saturday evening, February 27, 2010, at 7:00 p.m. at Kevin's Place Restaurant, 105 Main Street, Lykens. There will be free admission to the concert, and there will be a free will offering that will be sent to World Hunger. This event is sponsored by the Klingerstown Lutheran Parish. Questions can be sent to Pastor Jan Mills at pastorjan@comcast.net.

Grant Writing Workshop: March 3 and May 26, 2010

A grant writing training will be offered by Dory Campbell, Coordinator of the Evangelical Lutheran Coalition for Mission in Appalachia, on Wednesday afternoon, March 3, at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Mill Hall (near the Lamar interchange on Route 64). From 1:00 to 2:15 p.m. she will specifically address the St. Paul's Food Pantry. Then after a break, at about 2:30, she will offer "Grant Writing for Beginners" training. The session will finish around 4:00 pm. Interested folks are asked to register by one week in advance by contacting Pastor Steve Shipman, prshipman@comcast.net or 570-916-7780. Directions are available on request.

Campbell will again offer “Grant Writing for Beginners” training at Pine Street Lutheran Church in Danville on Wednesday, May 26, beginning at 6:00 p.m. This will be a three-hour session, and is again open to any interested people. There is no cost for this training, but advance reservations are requested. For more information or to register for the session in Danville, contact the church office at 570-275-2110. Office hours are 9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m. Monday thru Thursday. The e-mail address is pinestch@ptd.net.

Lutheran Marriage Encounter: March 19-21, 2010

The Western PA Lutheran Marriage Encounter has scheduled a Marriage Encounter Weekend for March 19-21, 2010, at the Toftrees Golf Resort and Conference Center in State College. Marriage Encounter Weekends are designed to strengthen and revitalize ALL MARRIAGES and run from 8 p.m. on Friday night until around 5 p.m. on Sunday. Couples overwhelmingly report that they fell in love with their spouse all over again. All costs for 2 nights lodging, 5 meals, and all supplies are covered by a \$45.00 per couple registration fee plus a confidential contribution of whatever amount you choose that you are given the opportunity to make at the end of the weekend. Registrations are limited, and all Western PA Weekends had waiting lists last year; so make your reservation now to avoid disappointment. The other 2 Western PA Weekends for 2010 will be April 30-May 2 at The Riverside Inn (20 miles south of Erie) and October 22-24 at the Radisson in Sharon, PA (an hour north of Pittsburgh). For further information or to sign up for a Weekend, go to www.GodLovesMarriage.org or contact Western PA Lutheran Marriage Encounter Directors, Fred & Julie Schamber at fjschamber@comcast.net or 724-325-3166. Please give each other the best gift of all--yourselves!

Bishop’s Day for Confirmands: March 21, 2010

A special event for the synod’s confirmands will be held on Sunday, March 21, 2010, from 2:00- 4:30 p.m. at United Lutheran Church in Sunbury (Wolf’s Crossroads). This special event is open to ALL confirmation students in the Upper Susquehanna Synod and the students’ parents and/or pastors. Bishop Robert L. Driesen invites you to join him for an afternoon of worship and learning more about what it means to belong to the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church. Reservations/registrations are not necessary, but would be helpful for planning. Confirmation teachers/pastors are encouraged to contact the Synod Office (secretary@uss-elca.org or 570-524-9778) with an approximate count by March 14, 2010.

Holy Tuesday Chrism Mass: March 30, 2010

The annual Holy Tuesday Chrism Mass service for leaders (rostered and lay) in the Upper Susquehanna Synod will be held on Tuesday, March 30, at 10:30 AM at **Christ Lutheran Church, Lewisburg**. Bishop Robert L. Driesen will preside at this Eucharist service which includes the blessing of oil for use in anointing. RSVP to the synod office (secretary@uss-elca.org or 570-524-9778) to reserve a spot for lunch following the service.

“Gathering in the East” Youth Leaders’ Conference: April 16-18, 2010

Attention Youth Ministers! It’s here. The time has finally come. It’s the annual youth retreat, the spaghetti dinner fundraiser, the parent’s Bible study, Youth Sunday, the budget meeting, the tough conversation with the youth advisor, the weekly Youth Group meeting, the late-night phone call from a young person in trouble. It’s time for the ministry you’ve been called and gifted to do, and you’re going to need the right tools. You grab your Bible, notebook, first aid kit, playground balls, and guitar, and it’s time to go. We know you work hard to minister to the young people and the families in your midst, and that you need to be equipped for that work. That is what the Gathering in the East Youth Leaders Conference is all about. Get connected. Be equipped. Find encouragement. Registration starts at just \$150.00 and hotel rooms start at \$75.00. For details on speakers, musicians, and workshop topics and to get a registration discount go to <http://www.gatheringintheeast.org> or contact Robin Kunkel at (570) 374-8444.

MONTHLY FEATURES

(W)holy, (W)holy, (W)holy: Health, Healing and Wholeness Article for March 2010

“How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long?” (Psalm 13:1-2a, NRSV)

Salt and pepper; peanut butter and jelly; tea and honey; coffee and cream; chronic pain and depression. Some things just seem to go hand-in-hand. Pain - especially the chronic/on-going kind, can wear down even the hardest of souls,

and is often closely linked to depression. It can trigger a wide range of negative emotions: irritability, anger, fear, anxiety, and despair. It is estimated that 30-80% of people with chronic pain also suffer from clinical depression. Chronic pain stresses all aspects of our well being - it certainly threatens our physical, but also our emotional, spiritual, even sometimes our financial health. People with chronic pain have three times the average risk of developing psychological symptoms, and depressed people have three times the average risk of developing chronic pain. Roughly 32 million people report having had pain lasting longer than one year. Those whose pain limits their independence are especially likely to become depressed.

Why? Depression and chronic pain share some of the same neurotransmitters - brain chemicals - as well as some of the same neural (nerve) pathways in the limbic region of the brain - the area that serves as the seat of our emotions. Yet depression associated with chronic pain often goes untreated - the pain often takes center stage during a typical 15-20 minute office visit. As the depression magnifies pain, it reduces our coping skills. Chronic pain may be difficult to eliminate, but almost always can be managed. Treatment often takes a multi-dimensional approach, which may include your regular healthcare provider, pain or palliative care specialist, psychiatrist and/or a therapist.

Medications are now available which work by affecting brain chemicals that are responsible for both mood and pain. Talk or cognitive-behavioral therapy can also help the individual deal with depression by exploring the mind-set or attitudes of the sufferer in regard to his/her pain, by sometimes uncovering long-standing emotional conflicts or negative thoughts that contributed to suffering, and by exploring some of the losses that may have been triggered by the chronic pain. Often a combination of both treatments will need to be utilized in order to lead to an improved sense of well-being. Once initiated, it is important to understand that treatments may take time to become effective, and because we all experience pain and depression differently, may require changes/adjustment to accommodate the needs of the individual.

Physical exercise also can be an important aspect of treatment. Exercise releases some of the same brain chemicals as anti-depressants. It is crucial that the individual work with his/her doctor to design an exercise plan that is safe and effective, and does not worsen the pain.

Chronic pain and depression may lead to spiritual crisis, resulting in a feeling of hopelessness, a sense of abandonment, questioning the meaning of life, and in severe cases, even consideration of suicide. An important aspect of being with those who suffer is listening with one's whole being without judgment of feelings that may be expressed. Gently assist them in exploring additional pain management techniques. A daily prayer ritual may bring some relief or at least a diversion from pain. Learning meditative prayer and/or relaxation techniques can also be very beneficial. Finally, assist the individual in maintaining ties with his/her congregation - through visits, providing the Eucharist, cards, flowers, taped worship services. Being a part of a compassionate, praying community is a vital means of social, emotional, and spiritual support. (Resources: <http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/depression-chronic-pain>; http://www.johnshopkinshealthalerts.com/reports/healthy_living/3034-1.html?type=pf; and http://www.health.harvard.edu/newsweek/Depression_and_pain.htm)

"I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation." (Psalm 13:5)

Debbie Best
Diakon Family Life Services

Nurse's Notes - Bulletin Blurbs for March 2010

March 7: Need more sleep? Here is a plan to help you get to sleep earlier.

1. Gradually move your bedtime up by 15 minutes each night.
2. Dim the lights around the house about an hour before bed, and start a routine that tells your body it's time to sleep. (Put on your PJs, wash your face, brush your teeth.)
3. Avoid the distraction of the TV and computer.
4. Meditate or do light stretching. Pick a favorite short Bible verse or phrase to repeat in your mind. People who relax before bedtime are able to fall asleep a half-hour earlier than those who do not, and get up to an extra hour of sleep. (Prevention, February 2010, pg. 18)

March 14: New Rule for Spotting Skin Cancer

Current guidelines used to detect abnormal moles state that people should look for moles only greater than 6 mm (larger than a pencil eraser). "But size is increasingly arbitrary and irrelevant," says researcher Stuart Goldsmith, MD.

One study estimates that 22% (more than 1/5th) of invasive melanomas are less than 5 mm - so don't overlook smaller moles that appear abnormal (dark colored, with irregular borders), he stresses. (Prevention, February 2010, pg. 20)

March 21

Your breakfast may be contributing to raising your blood pressure? Your toast or cereal could be hiding excessive salt, the additive known to jack-up blood pressure. Research says bread and cereal are among the top contributors of sodium to your diet. Getting more than 2,300 mg per day - a teaspoon of table salt - increases your risk of high blood pressure. Registered Dietitian, Dave Grotto, recommends choosing 100% whole grain bread and cereals that contain no more than 150 mg of sodium per serving. (Prevention, February 2010, pg. 43)

March 28: My laundry has what?

We know that germs like wet areas to thrive, so to cut down on germs, remove your laundry from the washer within 30 minutes of its completed cycle. With folks saving money by using cold water, germs can survive the wash cycle. Charles Gerba, PhD, professor of microbiology at the University of Arizona, states that research found that 25 percent of home washing machines contain fecal bacteria (from undergarments). To reduce germs: don't overload the washer, so detergent can penetrate the fabric; wash undergarments in a separate cycle; once a week, run an empty cycle with only a cup of bleach to kill bacteria; and yes, your dryer will also kill lingering bacteria. (Prevention, February 2010, pg. 136)

Safety Tips for Ministries from Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company for March 2010

Freshen Up Your Building Security Efforts

Spring is right around the corner; and along with spring-cleaning, it's a good time to evaluate your building's security. When it comes to making sure your building is safe from crimes like theft and vandalism, there's more to think about than the quality of your locks and whether or not you have a building security system (although these are important). Here are some other areas to consider:

- Effective key management
- Adequate lighting—indoor and outdoor
- Well-maintained landscaping
- Condition of the neighborhood
- Guidelines for sharing the building
- Securing valuables and equipment
- Up-to-date property inventory

If any of these topics bring questions to mind, Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company has many free resources about building security in its online library of safety and risk management materials for ministries, <http://www.SafetyCentralOnline.com>. You can even download a building security checklist that will help you get started. Be sure to contact your insurance agent if you have specific questions about this topic.