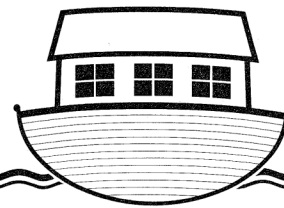


# USS ARK

News of God's People in Action



February 2011

God's work. Our hands. + Upper Susquehanna Synod + Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

## Where Do Our Offerings Go?

This is a question often heard around budget time. Frequently the question centers around the congregation's contribution to "mission support," also known as "benevolence." For some, it is a question of how the congregation can meet its basic expenses while also supporting ministries outside the congregation. Hopefully for many, it is a sign of our working together doing ministry in the name of our risen Lord, Jesus Christ, and the fruits of the Spirit. You really do not have to look too hard or too far to see our mission support dollars at work, doing God's work. It should be noted that when members give designated gifts to specific ministries, the gifts are in addition to what is provided through the undesignated gifts given through mission support. From the time of its inception in 1988, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has been understood as one church in three expressions: congregations, synods, and the churchwide organization. This interdependent relationship is consistent with how the mission and ministries of the ELCA are funded. As partners that share in the responsibility for carrying out God's mission, all three expressions share in the responsibility to develop, implement, and strengthen this church's financial support.

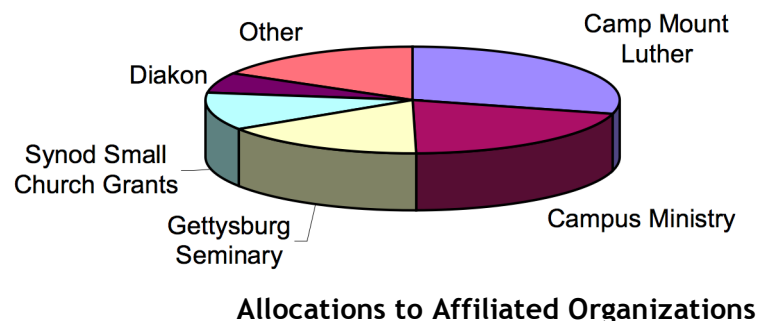
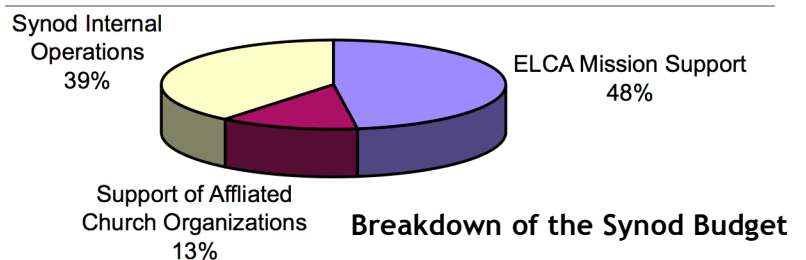
Your weekly offering supports the mission of the whole ELCA doing God's work in the world. A large part of your offering stays right in your congregation to support your congregation and local ministries. If your congregation gives 10 percent of offerings for mission support, that means that one dime from every dollar given in the offering plate goes to the synod. The Upper Susquehanna Synod keeps a nickel of that dime and uses these funds for local programs, including small church grants and our companion synod programs. In addition, money is allocated to these:

- Camp Mount Luther
- Campus Ministries at Penn State, Bloomsburg University, Penn College, Mansfield University, and Lock Haven University
- Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg
- Diakon Lutheran Social Services
- Susquehanna University and Gettysburg College
- Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in PA
- Evangelical Lutheran Coalition for Mission in Appalachia
- PA Lutheran Network and PA Council of Churches
- Region 8 (our cooperative ministry with our seven synod partners)

The rest of the synod budget is then used to support congregations and rostered leaders as they work in local communities and throughout the world. This includes candidacy, call process, congregational crisis support, leadership development, administration, and support of all the various task forces, committees, and programs of the synod. It also includes the Lay Ministry Institute, which oversees training of lay worship leaders, lay evangelists, and lay Christian educators.

Finally, half of the dime (the other nickel) goes to support the churchwide organization. Some mission funds may return to the synod and your congregation in the form of grants, services, programs, and resources. These include the ministries of Pr. Gregory Kramer, regional gift planner for the ELCA Foundation; and Beth Yenchko, the synod's Director for Evangelical Mission. Funds are also used for administration; new congregations (61 in 2010); global missions, including 250 mission personnel in 50 countries; education and preparation of pastors through support for eight ELCA seminaries; outreach to young adults through 1,530 Lutheran early childhood education centers, 267 Lutheran elementary schools, 147 outdoor ministries, and campus ministries at 28 Lutheran colleges and 187 universities; the National Youth Gathering; health and pension benefits for retired clergy, missionaries, and lay workers; military chaplains; ELCA Book of Faith; World Hunger; Lutheran Disaster Response; Lutheran Immigration Services; Lutheran Social Ministry Organizations; and partnerships with the Lutheran World Federation, World Council of Churches, and National Council of Churches.

There are many ministries that are administered through the churchwide and synod offices. This is only a snap shot of the ministry that happens because of your support. All this would be impossible to do if it was left to individual congregations; but as a synod of 136 congregations with approximately 40,000 members and a church of 10,500 congregations with 4.8 million members, we are able to accomplish some pretty amazing things. It truly is God's work with our hands.



## Plan a Fourth of July Celebration Now!

St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Williamsport began a unique hospitality ministry 13 years ago. The church had many people parking in their lot and walking past their church to get a good spot to watch Williamsport's annual fireworks display. The congregation wanted to do something hospitable for those people; so they started a Fourth of July Celebration. Pastor Kenneth Elkin, Becky Miller-Pryor, Alice Alt, and Donna Clark got together and offered free fresh popcorn and sodas. Today, in addition to offering the popcorn and sodas, there are also home baked goods, bottled water, and hot dogs. In 2010, they served 275 people. Each package of food/beverage that people take contains a label that says, "This is a gift from St. Mark's" and includes their service times and website. They hand out items until they are gone, with the popcorn freshly popped until 25 minutes before the fireworks. They also offer a free concert of patriotic music in their nave prior to the fireworks, and display a table of small trinkets (such as cross necklaces, coloring page packets, old Sunday School material and unused library books) asking for donations to go to a soup kitchen.

To get volunteers and donations, they place announcements in their bulletin and have sign-up sheets in their narthex. A few volunteers stay to clean up, and they are done by the time the fireworks start. The volunteers also place a sheet of paper on every car parked in their lot saying, "Thank you for being part of St. Mark's," again listing worship services and website.

The pastor says that many people are suspicious about the free gift, but many do take it. Pastor Elkin says, "It's really a great feeling that people experience our goodwill and hospitality in Christ's Name and acknowledge it. This is an application of Evangelism - not all people will accept the free gift of Christ at first, but don't give up; keep encouraging." To find out more on this ministry, contact Pr. Elkin at 570-323-4619 or [pastor@stmarkswilliamsport.org](mailto:pastor@stmarkswilliamsport.org). You can also check out St. Mark's website at <http://www.stmarkswilliamsport.org>

*Sandy Grier, AIM, is the USS Social Ministry Project Coach. That program is funded by Diakon to help congregations discern what outreach ministries will work best with the gifts of your congregation and the needs of the community. If you would like to meet with Sandy, contact her at 570-220-5039 or [sandygrier@comcast.net](mailto:sandygrier@comcast.net). There is no fee for this service.*

## Up and Down the Valleys



Local Episcopal Bishop Nathan Baxter hosted a luncheon for three fellow bishops to welcome the newest to the area. The luncheon honored the Rev. Joseph P. McFadden, the new bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg. The four bishops came together recently as the LARC (Lutheran/Anglican/Roman Catholic) bishops' fellowship, which included Lower Susquehanna Synod Bishop B. Penrose Hoover and Upper Susquehanna Synod Bishop Robert L. Driesen.

Seven people from St. Stephen's, Licking Creek (*Pastor Chris Mathiason*), traveled to New Orleans to work for Habitat for Humanity in January. They worked on a home there and also had a chance to do some sightseeing.

St. Paul's, Gowen City (*Pastor David Byerly*), held their third annual Veteran's Recognition Dinner in November. Twenty-five veterans attended that dinner, which started as the congregation's way to thank their local service personnel.

Kylie Kuhns, a member of St. Paul's, Erdleys (*Pastor Wayne Muthler*), is founder of Kelsey's Dream, which works to provide chemo ducks to youngsters with cancer. Kylie recently appeared on the Rachael Ray Show, in USA Today, and local TV, radio, and newspaper outlets to promote her cause. Kelsey's Dream is named after Kylie's sister, who died in 2005 from cancer.

Himmels, Rebeck (*Pastor Jane Compton*), hosted Mission Visitor Beth Yenchko in November. During worship, Yenchko presented information about the various ministries in which Diakon is involved in our synod. Diakon is funded partially through congregational mission support. Your congregation can invite a mission visitor to speak about a variety of ministries. To schedule, contact the synod office.

USS ARK is a publication of the Upper Susquehanna Synod, ELCA. Permission is granted to reproduce USS Ark for congregational communications. Send your mission stories and ministry ideas to Editor Chad Hershberger at [news@uss-elca.org](mailto:news@uss-elca.org).



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

The Rev. Robert L. Driesen, Bishop

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