

USS ARK

News of God's People in Action



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

Focus on **Ministry on Campus**

The Upper Susquehanna Synod supports the ministry at seven campuses throughout Central Pennsylvania. Not only do mission dollars financially help these ministries, but the support of volunteers also enhances the work that is done by students at these institutions of higher education. The campus ministries we support include Bloomsburg University, Lock Haven University, Mansfield University, Pennsylvania College of Technology, and Penn State University. We also support Susquehanna University and Gettysburg College which are Lutheran colleges. Here are two stories of what these ministries are doing!

SU CASA is Service Learning

By Rev. Mark Wm. Radecke, Susquehanna University

Every winter since 1999, the Susquehanna University chaplain's office has taken students to Costa Rica and Nicaragua for two weeks of service learning. After working with congregations and an orphanage and studying the academic topic, "Images of Jesus in Central America," one sophomore wrote this in her journal:

"I felt like I was seeing the world through new eyes and in a way I was, but how could any one of my friends or family possibly understand that a change like that was possible within a short span of two weeks? I'd seen real poverty for the first time in my life, I'd learned about Christology and liberation theology, realized the political power of the U.S. from outside of the country, and even my ideas of God/Jesus had changed! My role in this world as a Christian had changed in that I felt I'd been exposed to something that now demanded greater responsibility. When your eyes are opened to something like that you cannot simply choose to forget...not that I'd ever, ever want to."



Susquehanna University students work with residents of a shantytown in Costa Rica, pouring a concrete floor to expand a family's modest home.

Caring for Students at LHU

By Pastor Jeff Seeley, Lock Haven University

It is not atypical to think of college students as being poor; a college club advisor is always cautious about charging too much for an event, lest the students' laundry doesn't get done nor textbooks get purchased. But we're talking about a different kind of poverty that hits at the heart of survival. We're talking about university students, several of whom are members of the Protestant Campus Ministry at Lock Haven University.

Recently, we encountered a student who had stopped taking his medication because his prescriptions ran out and he didn't have the money to renew them. A student desperately needed a job so he wouldn't be evicted from his apartment but he didn't have nice clothes to wear to an interview. A commuting student's only mode of transportation, a bicycle, broke down while going to Wal-Mart to get diapers for her baby. Another student dropped by the Campus Ministry office with a huge duffle bag on his back carrying everything that he owned; he had little or no transportation, food, or place to lay his head.

Certainly we are not talking about the majority of students here; but, just as we encourage our students to engage in outreach ministries, many of the students themselves need our care. By God's grace and bounty, we have been able to address these needs.

"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

--Matthew 25:35-36

The Value of a Lutheran College Experience

From Lutheran Colleges and Universities, Sioux Falls, SD

Compared to Lutherans who graduate from public universities, the men and women who graduate from Lutheran colleges and universities are more involved in church communities, from lay leadership at the congregational level to positions of prominence in the larger church. For Lutherans, faith is a source of focus and strength, enabling individuals to reach beyond their own concerns to connect with and serve others. At Lutheran colleges, study, faith, and service are closely intertwined. It's not surprising then that graduates of our colleges benefit significantly from the opportunities for spiritual development. Your help at the congregational level is crucial in recruiting students to Lutheran schools. Here are five easy ideas you can help in this endeavor:

- Organize a Lutheran College Sunday; invite alumni in your congregation to wear gear from their alma mater.
- Help students and families organize carpools to a Lutheran College Fair in your area.
- Identify a Champion of Lutheran Higher Education at your congregation who will talk to prospective students.
- Post a map of the Lutheran colleges and universities in a central area at church.
- Talk to a neighbor or friend about the value of a Lutheran college experience and point them to <http://www.lutherancolleges.org>. You can also join the Lutheran colleges and universities Facebook page!

TIRED OF GIVING TIES, MUGS, AND FRUITCAKE FOR CHRISTMAS?

Several congregations in our synod have Mission Malls just in time for this holiday season. Mission Malls offer the opportunity to share the Christmas spirit by giving a donation to a worthwhile cause in someone's honor as an alternative gift. "Shoppers" receive a lovely card to be given to the recipient that will explain the charitable gift in their honor. Suggestions of uses for "Mall gifts" include parents, grandparents, or teachers who have reached their limit of ties and knick-knacks; children, who already have loads of toys with more on the way; or a special friend or relative that you want to remember with something both meaningful and unique. Charities that are benefiting from these Mission Malls include national and local organizations (including soup kitchens and homeless shelters) and Lutheran organizations such as Camp Mount Luther, Susquehanna University's SU CASA program, Lutheran Training Institute (LTI) in Liberia, and the ELCA World Hunger Program

Here are some congregations that we know are doing Mission Malls this year in November and December: First, Mifflinburg; St. John's, Mifflinville, and Hidlay, Bloomsburg; Zion, Sunbury; and Zion, Turbotville. In addition, a Fair Trade Fair was held at United In Christ, West Milton; and St. Michael's, Cogan Station, had an ELCA World Hunger Global Barnyard event.

Up and Down the Valleys

Bishop Robert Driesen led prayers as part of a Vigil of Remembrance and Hope on the Capital Steps in Harrisburg (3rd and State Streets) to remember the 45,000 people who die each year for lack of health care. The vigil was held in late October.

The Upper Susquehanna Synodical Women's Organization held their annual Peace Pole service on October 24, 2009, at the synod office. The theme was "God's Gift of Simple Living" and the speaker was Deb Best.

Pastor Ricky Phillips (Mazeppa and Dry Valley) now also serves as a hospice chaplain at Evangelical Hospital, Lewisburg.

Centre, Mifflintown (Pastor Louise Reynolds) and the Port Royal Parish (Pastor Charles Hershberger) along with Port Royal and Mexico Presbyterian Churches held a joint Reformation service on October 25. The service featured special music and a joint choir.

St. Luke, Williamsport (Pastors Anke and Eric Deibler) is in the process of doing some future visioning as their council unanimously approved recommendations of a Long-Range Planning Team. The next step is to appoint a Mission Planning Team to recommend specific steps toward implementing those recommendations.

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.



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