

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 Theological Education with Youth

Theological Education with Youth (TEY) is a joint initiative of the Lutheran Seminaries at Philadelphia and Gettysburg that creates spaces of theological exploration and discovery for high school age disciples. TEY offers several programs that young people can participate in to learn more about theology. Several teens from our synod recently participated in TEY events. From July 10th -24th, Jordan Reitz (St. John's, Watsontown) was a scholar with the Summer Theological Academy. Jordan studied in the courses on "Thinking about God in Our Own Situation" (taught by LTSP faculty Dr. John Hoffmeyer who is pictured with her at right), and the course Gospel & Hermeneutics (taught by LTSG Lecturer Dr. Surekha Nelavala). From July 31st - August 7th, Wilson Duran (St Luke, Williamsport) and Joseph Iwanski (St Luke, Bloomsburg) were scholars with the Crossroads Event. The group explored the work of social justice and advocacy ministries like LIRS, LWR, & Bread for the World. For more information on TEY please go to <http://www.theologicaleducationwithyouth.com>.



Upper Susquehanna Synod Crossroads Participants Wilson Durand and Joseph Iwanski at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg.

Jordan Reitz (St. John's, Watsontown) attended the TEY Academy and wrote the following about the experience:



At TEY, we learned to examine scripture using an exegetical approach. We also learned about high and low Christology and which of the gospels display which type of Christology. In addition to the Christology course, there was also a "themed" course that I attended in which we read *Jesus the Liberator* (the English version that is) by Jon Sobrino. In that class we learned about the situation of El Salvador in the 60's and 70's. We also learned about Archbishop Oscar Romero and about what he did that made him so popular with the common people. The thing I liked best about that class was reading *Jesus the Liberator* and learning about Liberation Theology. Liberation Theology was something that I had never been exposed to before, but I enjoyed learning about how different situations and settings affect the theology of the people.

A highlight for me at TEY was the worship experiences. Each participant was assigned different leadership parts at different points during the two weeks. We got to try various different responsibilities during the worship and got to feel what best suited us. We practiced chanting, which was not as easy as I had thought it would be. I had taken my guitar and clarinet and was able to use them during the worship experiences. Worship before breakfast and before bed really helps you appreciate God more since those are the most beautiful times of the day. I also learned that the hymns you like often affect and/or reflect what you believe in terms of theology.

We had the opportunity for service work volunteering at Haven Ministries, a homeless shelter for families. At Haven, we tended the garden and flowerbeds although some of us cleaned floors before joining the rest of the group in the garden. There was also some time for fun and with the hot weather the pool at Susquehanna University and tubing in the Susquehanna River were both welcome relief. On the final night we had a talent show. I did my best Elvis Presley impression singing "Burning Love" with another student.

Lastly, but certainly not least, I learned that by being in community with other people in the group you can learn more about and delve deeper into theology than you ever could by just reading a book about theology by yourself. Another thing that was really stressed at TEY was taking time to be with other people just to relax and have fun so your brain can function fully when it is time to study. Of all the things I learned at TEY, I think that was the most important and hardest lesson to learn.

Good Shepherd, Berwick (Pastor John Koons) welcomed 20 new members on Pentecost Sunday. Two infants and three adults were baptized.



Social Ministry in Berwick

Grace Lutheran in Berwick offers a number of Outreach ministries including an annual Block Party, Blanket Sunday and World Hunger offerings, Harvest Home, and preparation and serving of meals at the Salvation Army. In addition, Grace offered a President's Challenge in February. This was a unique way to collect non-perishable food items. Grace's congregational council president offered to match the number of non-perishable items received and in celebration of her birthday, she asked people to bring items for the food pantry instead of bringing a gift for her. Because of the Congregational Council President's Challenge, the church collected more non-perishable items than ever before. This is something easy to plan and implement and very effective to help the hungry in your community.

Sometimes ministry is best done in partnership with others and so Grace holds their Vacation Bible School with two other churches in the community. They also partner with the local newspaper for a program called "Brighter Christmas Fund," giving gifts for families in need. Grace's donations come from the profits from an annual hoagie sale. Grace's pastor, Chad Hebrink, shared that last year when the state had budget problems, Grace and two other local churches stepped in and sponsored funding for Meals on Wheels for six weeks within the Berwick area. Should you have any questions, please contact Pastor Hebrink at 570-752-3196.

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 your congregation has and the needs of the community. If you would like to meet with Sandy, contact her at 570-220-5039 or sandygrier@comcast.net. There is no fee for this service.

Up and Down the Valleys

Greg Berger and Ethan Beall-Ellersieck, (*St. Luke, Sunbury*), pedaled 100 miles to support the church's many ministries in September. The two were accompanied part of the way by Pastor Christoph Teille (*Elysburg Lutheran Parish*). Their planned route took them past 58 church members' homes, some adorned with bright yellow signs, showing support for the cyclists. The name of the ride, "Pedaling for a Purpose," came from members submitting suggestions. The congregation then voted for one of ten phrases by placing money in the container of their favorite. The winning phrase "Pedaling for a Purpose" was submitted by Ada Lee Newman of Sunbury.

Synod Council, at its September meeting, made official the steering committee for the "Carol G. Main Scholarship Fund." The fund was started in Spring 2007 to honor the ministry Carol Main, wife of Bishop Emeritus A. Donald Main. The purpose of the fund is to provide limited education scholarships (towards school fees and/or tuition only) for the spouses of pastors of the Lutheran Church in Liberia. The steering committee consists of Carol Bradford (chair), Ruth Koble, Pastor Mary Peterhaensel, Deborah Bernheisel, and Pastor Beth Ann Stone.

Rev. Sarah Hershberger (*Penn State Lutheran Campus Ministry*) and Chad Hershberger (*USS Director of Communications*) attended "Follow Me- Sharing the Gospel in a 2.0 World" in Chicago in August. The conference was for ELCA Campus Ministry staff and students as well as ELCA Communicators. Featured speakers included the Rev. Mark S. Hanson, ELCA presiding bishop; Eboo Patel, founder and executive director of the Interfaith Youth Core, the Rev. Nadia Bolz-Weber, founding pastor of House for All Saints and Sinners, an ELCA mission church in Denver as well as Michael Organ and Andrew Bleeker, who served as internet advertising directors for the Obama campaign in 2008. The conference dealt with using social media to share the gospel to the younger generation.

This month, Himmel's Church (*Pastor Jane Compton*) is celebrating the 50th anniversary of the construction and dedication of the current church building. A special service features The Rev. Mark Billow, son of former pastor the Rev. Paul Billow, and a slide show of prior church buildings and the construction process of the current building after the former building was destroyed by fire.

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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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
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The Rev. Robert L. Driesen, Bishop

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