

USS ARK

News of God's People in Action



Oct 2011

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



Volunteers with St. Luke, Bloomsburg, Sawdust Ministry help a flooded-out Espy family clean-up and start on the road to rebuilding.

Sawdust Mission To Columbia County

During the week of September 26 to October 1, more than 100 volunteers worked to help flood relief efforts in Columbia County. The mission project was part of the Sawdust Ministry at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Bloomsburg. The group was scheduled to go on a mission trip that week but opted instead to stay in their home area and help with efforts here.

The expanded Sawdust Team worked daily from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and during the week worked about 1,200 man-hours in 14 different homes. In addition to volunteers from St. Luke, members of other area churches helped, along with 58 college-age volunteers one day.

Work completed included drywall removal, mudding-out and washing down basements, replacing electrical wiring and panels, repairing floors and floor joists, among other tasks. The workers also spent time in conversation with homeowners, encouraging them to express grief and debrief about their loss.

Mike McCay, who heads up the Sawdust Ministry, is willing to coordinate work for teams who still wish to help. Contact him at mccay4@gmail.com or 570-317-5418.



VBS Goes to the Mall

Today's Lutherans in Christ, an outreach ministry of the North Branch

Conference, held a

one-day Vacation Bible School (VBS) experience at the Columbia Mall near Bloomsburg on Saturday, August 6, 2011. The staff from Camp Mount Luther led the program for the day for 11 participants ranging in age from pre-Kindergarten to grade 6. Activities included games, crafts, singing, worship, Bible Study, and parachute games. Today's Lutherans in Christ talked about the possibility of hosting a VBS at the mall for a number of years. This spring, the group stepped forward, planning the event as a community outreach.

After lunch, the participants and camp staff moved into the mall's atrium to participate in some activities with the parachute. A few wondered if moving there would draw any response from mall security, which was located nearby. Instead, one family with three young children passed by and asked if they could join in the parachute activities. In conversation with the parents, it was discovered the family was looking for a church and live only about a mile from one of the congregations that was assisting with VBS. In addition, people walking around the mall welcomed the participants and thanked them for coming.

Pastor Chad Hebrink of Grace, Berwick, was one of the organizers and said, "I am proud of the public witness displayed by Today's Lutherans in Christ as they ventured beyond the safety and familiarity of their own church facilities and hosted this Vacation Bible School at the Columbia Mall. Thank you to the staff of Mount Luther for providing an exciting and engaging program and adapting to the unique setting in the mall."



Up and Down the Valleys

St. John's, Espy (*Pastor Gordon Smith*) stands in one of the hardest hit neighborhoods from the recent flooding. The church has been providing three meals a day for flood victims for over a month. They need help with providing this service. If your church might be able to provide some kitchen help, such as cooking or bringing and serving a meal, please call Merrill Smith at (570) 205-9284.



Gary Hutchinson and Rev. Cindy Camp pose recently during flood relief efforts in Lycoming County. Hutchinson serves as the synod's Disaster Response Coordinator, in conjunction with Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries. Camp serves with Diakon, working in disaster response.

Mountain Grove Lutheran Parish (*Pastor Jennifer Kopacz*) was heavily involved in flood relief. Many of their members, who were fortunate not to have been personally affected by the flood, volunteered at Agape Ministries, and others prepared and served dinner there. The parish housed a significant amount of overflow clothing from Agape in Emanuel's basement. Parish members have volunteered to staff the basement weekday evenings for those who need clothing but cannot come during the workday.

Recent Nobel Peace Prize recipient, **Leymah Gbowee**, was a visitor in the Upper Susquehanna Synod in 2004. As a member of St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Monrovia (Sinkor), Leymah responded to a vision to organize the Women in Peace Building Network. The PBS documentary, "Pray the Devil Back to Hell," details her taking the movement international. Ruth Koble, whom Gbowee stayed with during her local visit, said, "I rejoice in the honor bestowed upon her work. She truly deserves it."

PASTOR NOTES: **Pastor Sarah Hershberger** has begun a year-long intentional interim call at St. Luke, Williamsport. **Pastor Carla Volland** (Clarkstown and Lairdsville Parish) began to serve as interim pastor at Church of the Savior, Williamsport. **Pastor Nathan and Jennifer Baker-Trinity** (Beaver, Beaver Springs) welcomed newborn daughter Miriam Alice on October 2.

Trinity, McAlisterville (*Pastor Erin Bovendam*), does several outreach ministries each year including making Easter eggs, collecting dimes for children in India, collecting soda tabs to support service dogs, and participating in the Christmas Angels program with their local children and youth agency. To read more about what they do, visit <http://www.uss-elca.org/for-congregations/social-ministry-spotlight>.



The North Branch Conference's joint ministry, **Today's Lutherans in Christ**, celebrated a successful Fourth Annual Teddy Bear drive on August 28th with a picnic at Grace Lutheran in Berwick. Twelve congregations dressed teddy bears (and bunnies and lambs). The nearly \$1,007 raised went to five local food banks and the stuffed animals found new homes at the Ronald McDonald House in Danville.

The **USS Mission Visitors team** met on September 23 to hear Gary Womelsdorf report about the ELCA Mission Interpreter's conference in Chicago in August, where people involved in mission visitor ministry experienced compelling stories about how God is changing peoples' lives through mission support. Pastor Ted Cockley visited Christ Lutheran Church in Lewisburg on September 18 and spoke about Diakon's Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village. Your church can request a mission visitor to make a presentation during your worship service, Sunday School hour, or special meeting. Synod Vice President Mike Schrey is also available to make a presentation on synod finances and ministries to congregations one Sunday a month! Contact the synod office for more information.

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

PO Box 36, Lewisburg, PA 17837 570-524-9778 www.uss-elca.org