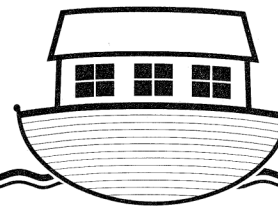


# USS ARK

News of God's People in Action



Sept 2011

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

## Synod Responds to the September 2011 Flood

Many areas in the Upper Susquehanna Synod were affected by flooding along the Susquehanna River and her tributaries earlier this month. As floodwaters rose, the synod's Disaster Response Team met with the deans of each conference to get updates and plan relief efforts.

The most extensive damage was sustained in the North Branch Conference in the Bloomsburg area. Despite dealing with flood damage of their own, the members of St. John's, Espy, are reaching out to the community in their time of need. The church, the parsonage, and the surrounding neighborhood were particularly hard hit. Floodwater filled the basements of both the church and parsonage, coming to within one inch of the first floor. This water has been drained, but extensive clean up remains necessary. Despite their own devastation, Pastor Gordon & Merrill Smith and members of St. John's reached out to the community. They pitched a tent in their yard, fired up gas grills, and have created a place where neighborhood residents and clean-up crews may sit down and eat. They serve three meals each day (several hundred are served each day in-house and with carry-outs) and their social hall at the church, which was unaffected by flooding, has become the temporary meeting place for the fire company, too. The Espy Fire Hall received flood damage, and is now in operation as the Incident Command Center and Red Cross headquarters. Pastor Smith says their relief efforts he said, "Christ calls us to help our neighbor, so how could we do less."



*Pastor Jeff Bohan, Pastor Gordon Smith, and Bishop Robert Driesen discuss flood recovery efforts at St. John, Espy. Also pictured is Merrill Smith.*



*Beds set up at St. Luke, Bloomsburg, for volunteer work crews.*

Pastor Josh Reinsburrow of St. John's, Mifflinville, has been working extensively with Columbia County Emergency Services, the Red Cross, and the Incident Command Center at the Espy Fire Hall. Pastor Jeff Bohan and St. Luke, Bloomsburg, have turned their building into a collection center for clothing, toiletries, and non-perishable foods. Cooperating with Agape Ministry of Bloomsburg, St. Luke has 30 beds set up dormitory-style to accommodate volunteers traveling from a distance. St. Luke also has shower facilities available. Pastor Gretchen Johanson reported that her congregation, Christ United, Catawissa, sheltered some flood victims. Washingtonville Lutheran (*Pastor Melody Sell*) also sustained damage at the church and parsonage as a result of groundwater. A good portion of the lower levels of both buildings was inundated with water in the early days of this disaster. Herndon and Dalmatia were also hit hard by the flood.

In the West Branch Conference, parts of Lycoming County were the hardest hit. Hughesville, Muncy, and Montoursville sustained the most damage, but none to church buildings. Christ, Montgomery (*Pastor Gunther Bernhardt*), sheltered 21 people one night, in cooperation with the American Red Cross. (*More...*)

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In the Middle Creek Conference, the Isle of Que sustained the most damage. Students from Susquehanna University were deputized by local police and helped with efforts to keep people off the island during flooding. Other SU students, who work in local fire companies, helped with rescue efforts. St. Paul's, Middle Creek Dam (*Pastor Hugo Schroeder*), had lots of water in their basement; the neighboring Methodist Church was flooded on their main level. The two churches worshiped together at St. Paul's on Sunday, September 11.

In the Buffalo Valley Conference, most communities had little or no damage, except for groundwater in basements. Parts of Milton and Lewisburg received some flood damage. St. John's, Delaware Run (*Pastor Jill Seagle*), sustained damage in their ground floor due to water run-off and Trinity, Milton (*Pastor Cheryl Berner*), removed all items in their basement, fearing flooding when river levels were predicted. Fortunately, the river crested lower than expected and no flooding occurred in the church building. The disaster relief team at Zion, Turbotville (*Pastor Erwin Roux*), helped an elderly woman whose home sustained major damage. Christ, Milton (*Pastor Pat Pittsnogle*), also helped a congregation member who sustained major damage on Front Street.



*Piles of debris piled outside the Thrivent office in Bloomsburg. That office was another victim of the flood.*

## Up and Down the Valleys

Health Kits, collected at Synod Assembly, will now be redistributed to relief efforts in our area. They are being stored at **St. Matthew's, Shamokin Dam** (*Pastor Wayne Muthler*).

The synod's LEARN Team held their second "Go Teach" event on August 13, at **Sharon, Selinsgrove** (*Pastor Robert Doll*). The day featured workshops on a variety of Christian education topics, networking, and a Bible study by Authorized Lay Christian Educator Sherry Bingaman. Pastor Breen Sipes served as chaplain for the event and Chad Hershberger provided music.

**PASTOR NOTES:** Pastors Anke and Eric Deibler (*St. Luke, Williamsport*) have received and accepted a call to Calvary Lutheran Church in Mount Airy, Maryland (DE-MD Synod). Pastor Curtis Zemencik has received and accepted a call to serve the Stone Valley Parish (*Salem Zion Church, Pillow and Stone Valley Church, Hickory Corners*), beginning October 14, 2011. Pastor Adrian Shearer (retired) began serving Grace, Point Township, and Trinity, Oak Grove, as stated supply and part-time interim pastor on August 1, 2011. Pastor Edwin Rehrauer (retired) is now serving as interim pastor and half-time supply of St. Luke, Sunbury.

The USS Transformational Ministry team is gearing up to lead their third event on October 1-2 for the Jersey Shore area churches participating in the Transformational Ministry Process. The next cluster of churches, which have decided to start the TM process, is in the Sunbury area. Those congregational teams will experience the first TM module November 11-12.

**St. Mark's, Alfarata** (*Pastor David Pennebaker*), recently started the Alfarata Coffeehouse, which offers live local music once a month. The evenings begin at 7 p.m. the second Saturday of each month and feature acoustic music. There are also refreshments and coffee. In an article in the *Lewistown Sentinel*, Pennebaker said, "It's good entertainment, not expensive, and something you can take your kids to and not be afraid of what they are going to hear."

**SOCIAL MINISTRY SPOTLIGHT MOVES:** Beginning this month, Sandy Grier's articles on Social Ministry are moving to a new column called, "Best Practices," in *Headwaters*, the synod's monthly newsletter for rostered and other leaders. We'll have snippets of her articles in *USS Ark* but to read the full article, please visit our website at <http://www.uss-elca.org/for-congregations/social-ministry-spotlight>.

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

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