Holy Humor Sunday Features Academy Awards

At worship on Sunday, April 23, 2017, members at Trinity, McAlisterville (Pastor Erin Bovendam) were surprised with an "Academy Awards" ceremony. The awards were presented to the men who were disciples in their Maundy Thursday drama, as well as others who helped with the service.

Awards were given out for best costume design, best director, best music director, best music, best understudy, best special effects, best supporting actress, best actor in a supporting role, and best actor in a leading role. Church Secretary Mary Lou Naylor handed out the mini-statues after a red carpet was unrolled for the "stars" to walk on to accept their awards. They also had a kazoo duet of “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” as part of the closing hymn.

The festivities were held as part of Holy Humor Sunday. That observance is an old Christian tradition for the Sunday after Easter, giving people the opportunity to laugh at Satan’s defeat and enjoying Christ’s victory. During social time after worship, there was an open mic where parishioners could tell their favorite clean church joke.

Distinguished Award for Retired Leader

As part of this year’s Gettysburg Seminary Spring Academy, a former synod leader received a prestigious award. The seminary presented Bishop Emeritus Robert L. Driesen with the Celebrated Lifetime Ministry Award. The presentation was made at the 2017 Distinguished Alumni Award Service of Thanksgiving, held in the Chapel of the Abiding Presence. In addition to Driesen’s award, former USS pastor, Rev. Bill Weiser, was presented with the Service in Parish Ministry Award; and, Rev. Dale Lind was presented with the Service in Specialized Ministry award.
In April, the USS Missional River workshop was held at Sharon, Selinsgrove (Pastor Robert Doll). Seven congregational teams shared how they have been engaging others in conversation. Assistant to the Bishop Craig Miller helped them ask powerful questions to draw out the wonderful life stories folks must tell.

Susquehanna University was the site for the annual Lutheran Youth Day. The event’s focus was on loving your neighbor and participants experienced community building exercises, worked on a service project, prayed through a labyrinth and worshiped together. Then they had time to ask Bishop Collins questions, hear from camp directors, including Mount Luther’s Chad Hershberger, and enjoy an up-close concert with Agape and J. Dean Williams.

Bishop Collins was with other Region 8 bishops in late April at a service commemorating Gettysburg Seminary’s 191 years of ministry. The seminary will combine with Philadelphia Seminary and become United Lutheran Seminary in July.

Up and Down the Valleys

Synod Council met in retreat in May to discuss finances, reflect on listening, and share ideas for the future direction of the synod. They also talked about stewardship and its effect on mission support.

On May 21, a special joint worship service will take place officially dedicating the creation of the Buffalo Valley Lutheran Parish (Pastor John Yost). This new parish consists of Christ’s United, Millmont and First, Mifflinburg. Bishop Barbara J. Collins will be presiding over the worship and dedication service which will include the installation of Pastor Yost, installation of Parish Council, Confirmation and Commissioning of their Mission Team that is heading out to Rocky Boy Indian Reservation.

Diakon’s Ohesson Manor will be celebrating its 40th anniversary in June with two community events. A Community Day and Concert will be held on June 4th from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. and an outdoor Rededication Service and reception on June 11 at 3:00 p.m. Please bring a lawn chair to both events.

St. Peter, Kreamer (Interim Pastor Nathan Baker-Trinity) has 16 choir robes to give away. They are tan with brownish colored collars. If interested, contact Linda Fisher at 570-374-4114.

Clergy Notes: Rev. Mike Sigler is now the interim at Botschaft (“Grubbs”), Mt. Pleasant Mills; St. Peter’s, Freeburg; and Zion (McKees), Mt. Pleasant Mills. Salem, Selinsgrove, voted to call Rev. Kristina Schaeffer. She began her call on April 24, 2017.

Three video clips of Bishop Collins’ installation, taken by Pastor Andy Weaver, are now available. You can use the following link, but will need to download the files to your computer to watch them. http://tinyurl.com/krlhkf7

Six students from Protestant Campus Ministry at Bloomsburg (Campus Minister Jill Young) attended the Vocation Exploration Initiative’s retreat at Princeton Theological Seminary in early March. Students heard vocation stories from ministers and seminary employees.
Upper Susquehanna Synod Events Calendar

Information on the ELCA Youth Gathering/Volunteer Registration Opening Soon
Next month (in May), volunteer applications for the ELCA Youth Gathering will go live and close on July 15. Current high school seniors and older are eligible to apply as volunteer staff. The gathering will be held in Houston, TX, from June 27- July 1, 2018. Congregations should start to identify youth, leaders, and a primary contact person. You can sign up for gathering news at www.elca.org/gathering. Now is also the time to set a budget and begin fundraising efforts. The gathering staff suggests budgeting between $900-$1200 to get youth to and from Texas. This includes a range in the cost of hotel rooms of $99-$150.

Charlene Rineer, our synod’s Gathering Coordinator, will be presenting workshops at Synod Assembly to share more details. On July 15, financial aid registration will open on the Gathering website. No congregation is too small to send kids. The average size group at the Gathering is 3-7 kids. If you are concerned about not having enough youth, you can also join in with a nearby congregation. More questions? Want more information? Check out www.elca.org/YouthGathering, join the Facebook group USS ELCA Youth Gathering Leaders (for adult leaders only) or contact Charlene Rineer at ckrorange@yahoo.com or 717-880-2872. (Please note the phone number area code was incorrect in last month’s USS Ark). For congregations who do not have youth attending the gathering – consider helping to support other youth of our synod by sponsoring a youth participant from a neighboring congregation. After all – we are church together!

May 20, 2017: CML Spring Work Day
Practice stewardship through service at Camp Mount Luther at their Annual Spring Work Day on Saturday, May 20, 2017, from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. They need your help getting the camp grounds and facilities ready for summer. There will be plenty to do and everyone in the family can help! Please bring supplies to do cleaning, mulching, raking, and light construction projects such as step ladders, buckets, rakes, etc.

May 22, 2017: Lutheran Day at the Capital
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in PA will hold their annual event on May 22 at Trinity Lutheran Church, Camp Hill. We mark the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in a time of great upheaval and division at home and around the globe. On May 22, we gather to consider how the Holy Spirit is re-forming us as the Word of God continues to change and renew the world. How can we be Church Together, for the sake of the world, in Pennsylvania? Bring your faith to the table, and join advocates from across the Commonwealth for a day of worship, learning and inspiration to ground and deepen your call to faith-rooted advocacy. The day will feature a keynote address by Dr. Cynthia Moe-Lobeda, Professor of Theological and Social Ethics, Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary of California Lutheran University, legislative briefing and visit training, issues and faith formation workshops, a continental breakfast, lunch and special advocacy celebration. Come to be inspired, prepared and equipped to act on issues that matter. Bring a team from your congregation, or partners from other traditions in your community. You don't have to be Lutheran to benefit from the issues and advocacy training! Most other bodies do not have their own state advocacy offices, and many would appreciate this opportunity. To learn more and register, click here: http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/register/event;jsessionid=17463E35FB25ECEAF7D5944045D62165.worker_registrant?llr=lvflt5dab&oeidk=a07edukmq05a668eb65

June 4, 2017: Evergreen Center Mortgage Burning and Circle of Faith Dinner
On Sunday, June 4, 2017, Camp Mount Luther will have a worship service at 7:00 p.m. at which time they will burn the mortgage on the Evergreen Center debt. The worship service is open to anyone who would like to attend to commemorate a milestone in the camp’s history. The service will be held outdoors, if the weather permits, so please bring a lawn chair. This will give the synod’s outdoor ministry a chance to thank those who helped achieve the goal of paying off the debt early and celebrate the opening of camp for the 2017 season.
June 6, 2017: “11 Steps to Increase Giving in Your Church” Webinar
Jennifer Perrow will present the workshop “11 Steps to Increasing Giving in Your Church” on Tuesday, June 6, 2017, at 1:30 p.m. Scripture doesn’t shy away from conversations about money, but church leaders often do. Learn some simple and effective ways to create a culture of increasing generosity in your church, including suggestions for joyfully engaging givers at every age and stage of life. They’ll talk about transforming your weekly church offering into a time of celebration, coaching church leaders to effectively talk about stewardship, creative ways to thank your givers, why a major gifts strategy makes sense for churches, how to keep your offering numbers steady during the summer, and more. The webinar is being sponsored by the Association of Lutheran Development Executives. If you can’t attend live, you may still register for the webinar and receive a recording. Webinars cost $75. Register at http://tinyurl.com/n8e4yfu.

June 10, 2017: Steward Leaders Gathering
The Upper Susquehanna Synod invites all steward leaders to a gathering on Saturday, June 10, 2017, at Christ’s United (4 Bells) Lutheran Church, 13765 Old Turnpike Road, Millmont PA. The event will run from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Steward leaders may include council members, Stewardship Committee members, pastors, or anyone in the congregation interested in caring for what God has given to us. Our gathering will provide an opportunity to network and to share best practices in Stewardship. Through Bible study and conversation, we will learn about how stewardship happens in our synod. Lunch is included. RSVP by June 2, 2017, to Brenda Krouse (Brenda@uss-elca.org or 570-524-9778).

June 16-17, 2017: Synod Assembly
The 30th Annual Assembly of the Upper Susquehanna Synod will be held at Susquehanna University on June 16-17, 2017. The theme of this year’s assembly is “Together in Mission: Relating and Reforming.” Guest speakers and musicians from the ELCA’s Global Mission Team will be with us, including Sunitha Mortha as our ELCA Churchwide representative. Items of business include adopting the 2018 budget and making changes to the synod constitution. Other notes as we prepare for this June event:

- **Singers Needed for Assembly Choir:** You are invited to sing as part of the choir that will provide musical leadership for the Eucharist on Saturday, June 17, at 2:00 p.m. in Weber Chapel Auditorium at SU. In addition to leading the liturgy and hymns, the choir will prepare special music for the service. Adult and high school singers who would like to sing in the Assembly Choir should have some choral experience in church and/or school. Being able to read music is helpful but not required. One rehearsal is scheduled for Sunday, June 5, from 2:00 – 3:30 p.m. in the chapel of Zion, Sunbury. We will also have one, perhaps two, opportunities to rehearse with the Glocal Team during the Assembly (both on June 17). If you plan to sing in the choir or have questions, please contact David Reier at dreier@ptd.net or 570-847-3435.

- **Pages Needed for Synod Assembly:** Calling all youth (who have completed at least sixth grade), college students, and seminarians! The 2017 USS Synod Assembly is looking for pages. You’ll be needed on Friday and Saturday, June 16-17, from 7:45 a.m. until the end of the day’s business (5:00 p.m. on Friday and 3:30 p.m. on Saturday). Responsibilities include handing out papers, bulletins, and other materials as well as serving as ushers for worship and counting votes when asked. All pages receive meals and a free T-shirt! If you have interested youth, please send their names and T-shirt sizes to brenda@uss-elca.org.

- **Live Tweet from Upper Susquehanna Synod Assembly:** We will also live “tweet” from our synod assembly. This year, we invite others to also tweet from the assembly and use this hashtag: #usselca17. If you’d like to see what is happening at assembly in June, search for the Twitter hashtag or visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/usselca.

- **Bulletin of Reports:** We are striving to go paperless this year with the bulletin of reports so materials will be available for download at www.uss-elca.org/assembly.
Looking Ahead to July at Camp
Camp Mount Luther is gearing up for the summer camping season for 2017 and is still accepting registrations for all programs. Late fees will begin to be accessed on June 2, 2017, so register soon to avoid the late fees! Some highlights of programs in July and August include:
• Family Camp, a great vacation for the whole family!
• Senior High X-Teen, a traditional program for that age group
• Night Owl, where campers stay up later each night and do nighttime activities
• Pioneers, juniors, and intermediates celebrating Christmas in July
• Craft, Lego, and Wild Sports (CLAWS) camp, doing more of those three activities
• Pick Your Days Day Camp when you pick how many days you want to come from 9:00 to 3:00
• Nature Detectives for younger campers to explore the outdoors
• Explorers and Sprouts for a shorter camp experience
• LOGIC where campers Live Outside in God’s Incredible Creation
• SURE for campers who want to Survive Using the Resources of the Environment
• Base Camp for those who don’t want an overnight camping experience during their camp week
• Intern for our senior high campers who want to learn what it’s like to be on staff.

For more information, visit the camp website at www.campmountluther.org or call 570-922-1587. This year’s theme at Mount Luther is “The Water of Life.” The theme will give campers a new awareness of how water and life are gifts from God. The Bible is filled with stories involving water as a powerful means by which God sustains, heals, revives, and saves us. God surrounds us and fills us with literal waters and spiritual waters that remind us how we are part of God’s life. Campers will dive into five Bible stories and daily themes that will show them God’s goodness, birth and belonging, enough for everyone, seeing and being the light, and resting in God.

July 16, 2017: Celebrate Christmas in July at Camp!
The Camp Mount Luther Staff invites everyone to attend their Campfire and Worship Service celebrating Christmas in July on July 16, 2017, at 6:30 p.m. The program will be held outdoors, weather permitting, so bring a lawn chair. In addition, there will be a Christmas carol sing either as part of worship or just after worship is over. There is no need to RSVP. Just show up ready to celebrate our savior’s birth at camp in the middle of the summer!

July 22, 2017: USSWO Convention
The Upper Susquehanna Synodical Women’s Organization Annual Convention will be held on Saturday, July 22, 2017, at the Evergreen Center at Camp Mount Luther, 355 Mt. Luther Lane, Mifflinburg. Women are asked to be present for this one-day convention as it brings an excellent opportunity for you to meet your sisters from neighboring churches and become informed about the workings of the Women of the ELCA. The theme for this year’s convention is “All Anew—Renewal of Spirit and Hope.” Registration forms are available at http://www.uss-elca.org/upper-susquehanna-synodical-womens-organization/

August 7-10, 2017: Rostered Ministers Gathering
The ELCA will hold its first ever Rostered Ministers Gathering in Atlanta at the Sheraton Downtown. This will be an opportunity for Rostered Ministers to assemble for worship, education, and fellowship. The theme will be “On the Way…Together,” using the Road to Emmaus story. There will also be two pre-gathering events for federal chaplains and young rostered ministers (20’s and 30’s). Early registration is open now and will be $245 per person which includes coffee breaks, four meals, keynotes, Bible studies, workshops, evening concert, worship, and interaction center. Registration fee increases on June 1 to $295 per person. Room rates will be $119 per night (plus taxes). Questions about this event can be sent to 2017MinistersGathering@elca.org or you can call 1-800-635-3522.

ATTENTION MARRIED COUPLES: Have you signed up for your fall Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend? Both of our spring Weekends had waiting lists, so sign up now for a fall Weekend to avoid
Couples overwhelmingly report that the Weekend is the best thing they have ever done for their marriage. The fall Weekends are:

- **September 15-17, 2017** at Spruce Lake Retreat Center, Canadensis, PA, a new hotel-style facility on Spruce Lake in the heart of the Pocono Mountains – an hour north of Allentown.
- **October 6-8, 2017** at the Black Swan Inn in Lee, Massachusetts. Nestled in the foothills of the Berkshire Mountains, a hidden gem overlooking Laurel Lake – an hour north of Hartford, CT.

Two nights lodging, 5 meals for each of you, and all supplies are included with your $100 per couple registration fee, plus toward the end of the weekend you will be given an opportunity to make a confidential contribution of whatever amount you wish toward the continuation of the program. Registrations are limited, so sign up today by going to the website: www.Godlovesmarriage.org and paying the registration with your credit card, or marking the option to mail a check. For questions, or if you would like a brochure with registration form mailed to you, contact Northeast US Directors of Lutheran Marriage Encounter, Fred & Julie Schamber, at fjschamber@comcast.net or 724-325-3166.

**October 15-20, 2017: Children, Youth & Family Ministry Certification School.**

Vibrant Faith (www.vibrantfaith.org) is a great ministry that has been at work for many years building up the church through leadership development and research. Bear Creek Camp (BCC) near Wilkes-Barre is hosting Vibrant Faith’s 75th certification school in October. The CYF Training School changes lives, equips leaders and helps transform ministries in effective and creative faith formation. It’s a 9-month program for the participants that begins with five days of group training at BCC and continues with one-on-one training via phone, blogs, videos, and webinars. Youth leaders, pastors, volunteers, other interested adults are the perfect folks who could benefit from a program like this. It’s typically a $2,000 fee, but, the camp is offering the program for $1,600. To sign up or get more information visit www.bearcreekcamp.org/vibrant-faith-training-school/
Sewer Upgrades This Spring

In November, the camp was notified by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) that we needed to address some bad test results in regards to our sewage treatment. Around the same time, a bear got into our sewage lagoon system and tore the liner in several places as well as chewed on the aeration system.

Over the past few months, we’ve been working with DEP and local engineers to make upgrades to the system to address these two issues. Most of the work has been completed and the sewer will be up and running for the summer season. The liner will be repaired, a new aeration system was installed, and a new decanting system was put into place to hopefully help the DEP test results.

Because this was an unplanned expense, and due to the high cost of repairs, the camp board voted to take out a loan (for five years) to cover the expense. The loan is for $125,000. It is estimated that the repairs will total at least $100,000.

The camp’s development consultants are working on a plan to repay that loan within a year through a special gifts appeal. If you would like to provide seed money to help us get that started, please send a donation to Camp Mount Luther and designate it for the “sewer project.”

Future Directions Survey

The camp board is considering our future directions as we look forward to expanding programs, services, and facilities following the retirement of the debt on the Evergreen Center. As the board looks to the future, we want to get input from our various constituencies for feedback on the board’s ideas. As we look to the future, we are evaluating our vision statement, opportunities, and challenges to help formulate a plan for the next five years. You can help by completing a survey by May 30, 2017.

The survey is at [http://tinyurl.com/kto4wwz](http://tinyurl.com/kto4wwz) This is the same survey that we have asked pastors, synod council, and others to fill out but now we are seeking general input from other friends of the camp. Please take a few minutes to give us your feedback!

Mortgage Burning and Circle of Faith Dinner

On Sunday, June 4, 2017, we will have a worship service at 7:00 p.m. at which time we will burn the mortgage on the Evergreen Center debt. The worship service is open to anyone who would like to attend to commemorate a milestone in the camp’s history. The service will be held outdoors, if the weather permits, so please bring a lawn chair. This will give us a chance to thank those who helped us achieve our goal of paying off the debt early and celebrate the opening of camp for the 2017 season.

Immediately before the worship service, we’ll hold our First Annual Circle of Faith Giving Club Dinner. Members of our giving club were sent invitations about details for this event, which will include a delicious dinner by our Hospitality Manager Toni Gessner and her staff, and a relaxed evening of fun and fellowship. After the dinner, we will have a short program of stories and the staff will provide some lively entertainment singing camp songs and maybe even do a skit or two. We’ll also award our first ever Cloud of Witnesses Award as we recognize the giving spirit of Mount Luther supporters. If you would like information on the Circle of Faith Giving Club, contact chad@campmountluther.org.
Looking Ahead to July

We are gearing up for the summer camping season for 2017 and are still accepting registrations for all programs. **Late fees will begin to be accessed on June 2, 2017, so register soon to avoid the late fees!** Some highlights of programs in July and August include:

- **Family Camp**, a great vacation for the whole family!
- **Senior High X-Teen**, a traditional program for that age group
- **Night Owl**, where campers stay up later each night and do nighttime activities
- **Pioneers, juniors, and intermediates celebrating Christmas in July**
- **Craft, Lego, and Wild Sports (CLAWS)** camp, doing more of those three activities
- **Pick Your Days Day Camp** when you pick how many days you want to come from 9:00 to 3:00
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- **LOGIC** where campers Live Outside in God’s Incredible Creation
- **SURE** for campers who want to Survive Using the Resources of the Environment
- **Base Camp** for those who don’t want an overnight camping experience during their camp week
- **Intern** for our senior high campers who want to learn what it’s like to be on staff.

For more information, visit the camp website at [www.campmountluther.org](http://www.campmountluther.org) or call 570-922-1587.

If you want to stay connected to Mount Luther this summer and find out what is happening during our various programs, we have ways for you to do that! On our Facebook page, you can see updates and pictures from each week. Check those out at [www.facebook.com/mountluther](http://www.facebook.com/mountluther). We also will post updates to our Twitter feed at [www.twitter.com/mluther](http://www.twitter.com/mluther). Daily blogs will be posted at [www.campmountluther.wordpress.com](http://www.campmountluther.wordpress.com) and will be shared on our social media pages. We will try to update daily our Facebook status and pictures, Twitter feed, and blog but please realize that our staff is quite busy and if updates are not posted, it’s because the campers and staff are so busy that they can’t get an update posted.

And, don’t forget, our daily First Light devotions will continue to be posted each weekday. Check them at [www.cmlfaithformation.weebly.com](http://www.cmlfaithformation.weebly.com).

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**Celebrate Christmas in July at Camp!**

The camp staff invites everyone to attend our Campfire and Worship Service celebrating Christmas in July on July 16, 2017, at 6:30 p.m. The program will be held outdoors, weather permitting, so bring a lawn chair. In addition, we’ll have a Christmas carol sing either as part of worship or just after worship is over. There is no need to RSVP. Just show up ready to celebrate our savior’s birth at camp in the middle of the summer!

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**Summer Staff Hired for 2017**

Our summer ministry team is hired and ready to begin their staff training later this month. Here is who you can expect to see this year:

- **Executive Director**: Chad Hershberger, Mifflinburg*
- **Assistant Director**: Charlene Rineer, Lewisburg*
- **Chaplain to Staff**: Andrew Fitch, New Berlin
- **Director of TLC**: Tara Barnard, Millerstown*
- **Director of Fun**: James Gates, Fairport, NY*
- **Director of Outreach**: Lindsey Hartman, Turbotville*
- **Office Manager**: Linda Aurand, Mazeppa*
- **Site Manager**: Tom Watters, Mifflinburg*

Our returning staff are indicated by a (*)

- **Counselors**
  - Marie Barnard, Millerstown: Allison Beaver, McAlisterville; Tori Callahan, Bloomsburg*; Gordon Emick, Williamsport; Anne Harshbarger, Belleville*; Carlie Lepley, Troxelville; CarolAnn Miller, Mifflinburg; Noah Roux, Turbotville*; Sarah Schaech, Pennsdale; Sean Stumpf, Selinsgrove; Sean Wither, Williamsport*; Zack Zimmerman, Lewistown*

- **Kitchen Staff**
  - Hospitality Manager: Toni Gessner, Mifflinburg*; Sierra Beiler, Mifflinburg*; Stacey Geiswhite, Mifflinburg*; Eric Gessner, Mifflinburg*; Kyle Gessner, Mifflinburg*; Ryan Gessner, Mifflinburg*; Hannah Schultz, Mifflinburg; Levi Yoder, Mifflinburg*