NEWS, PRAYERS, AND LINKS

- The Internal Revenue Service has issued its 2018 standard mileage rates. Effective January 1, the IRS standard rate is 54.5 cents per mile driven for ministry or business purposes.

- Annual Congregation Report to the ELCA – The deadline for the report is February 15, 2018! Constitutionally, it is the responsibility of the pastor to make sure the report is completed and submitted. The information provided on these reports helps to provide a picture of the ELCA as a whole and it also influences how our synod is perceived. Once again, synod staff will be working hard to get all congregation’s reports submitted. Please help us by getting your report completed on time. Those needing their ID number or password, call the synod office.

- Rostered Leader’s Report to the Synod Bishop – This report is handled as a confidential report to Bishop Collins. Each rostered person should complete and return this form by February 15, 2018. If there are matters you wish to discuss, the bishop will schedule a visit with you as quickly as possible. The link to the form is http://www.elca.org/About/Churchwide/Office-of-the-Secretary/Rostered-Leaders. It is also important to know that you need to save the form to your computer before filling it out and emailing to BpCollins@uss-elca.org. If you need a copy mailed to you, please contact the synod office. There is also an alternate short form on our website.

- Congregational Leaders Form 2018 – The contact information on this form is being requested so we have updated information about the congregation and can provide congregational leaders with resources to support them in their congregational ministries. It is important that we have an updated list of officers and staff with complete, current, and correct mailing and e-mail addresses. Please complete this form as soon as your new leaders are elected or appointed (by February 18 at the latest) and return it to the synod office. If you have not returned your statement of intent, please do that ASAP. NOTE: If you wish to complete this form online, you may access it in a fillable format on the USS website at http://www.uss-elca.org/administration/

- New Portico health ID cards have been issued for 2018! ELCA-Primary health plan members, use newly issued Portico Health ID cards starting Jan. You can request or print extras through Portico Care Coordinators by calling 877-851-5656.

- Lutheran World Relief would like to share these communications resources related to their Season of Hope Lenten campaign, as well as their annual offering of EcoPalms for Palm Sunday, which are sourced from farmers in Mexico and Guatemala who grow them in a socially and environmentally just way. More resources are available at the Season of Hope website at https://lwr.org/lent

MILESTONES

The Rev. Dean L. Hoelz completed his service as missionary on March 26, 2017, and has returned to the United States. Synod Council has granted him retired status. He now resides in South Carolina.

Rev. Pete Bergstresser has finished his interim at St. John, Leck Kill.

Retirements: Rev. Greg Kramer (Faith, Lewisburg) has announced his retirement, effective April 30. Rev. Charles Hershberger (Port Royal Parish) is retiring June 30.

Pastor Luther Martell was installed as pastor of St. Luke, Bloomsburg, on January 27.

With thanks to God for their ministry, we celebrate with these children of God the anniversaries of their ordination or consecration (note: anniversary years listed are in multiples of five only):

35 years: Melody Sell (Washingtonville, Hidlay, and Christ United, Catawissa) 1/23/1983

25 years: Kerry R Aucker (St. John, Jersey Shore, and interim St. James, Jersey Shore) 2/6/1993

15 years: David E Pennebaker (retired) 2/1/2003
MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES
(Updated January 31, 2018)

Served by Interim/Seeking Candidates
- Holy Spirit, Turbotville
- Messiah, Mifflintown
- St. John, Belleville
- St. Mark’s, Williamsport (Intentional Interim)

Served by Interim/Preparing Ministry Profiles
- Pine Street, Danville

Currently Served by Intentional Interim Pastor
- Christ and Trinity, Milton
- Grace, Shamokin, and St. Paul’s, Gowen City

Currently Served by Interim Pastor
- Beaver, Beaver Springs
- Christ, Buckhorn/St. Paul, Danville
- Faith, Richfield
- Grace, Point Township
- St. James, Jersey Shore
- St. John, Montgomery
- St. Peter, Kreamer
- Trinity, Oak Grove
- Trinity, Point Township
- Trinity, Shamokin
- Zion, Herndon
- Zion, Trevorton

Without Interim, Synod Staff Covering
- St. Luke, Sunbury
- Freeburg Parish
- St. John, Leck Kill
- St. Mark, Dormantown.
- Zion, Renovo

CONFERENCE MEETINGS

Buffalo Valley: March 1, 9:00 a.m. at Follmer

Juniata Valley: March 15, 10:00 a.m., St. John, Lewistown

Middle Creek: February 7, 10:30 a.m., St. Matthew, Shamokin Dam

North Branch: February 28, 9:30 a.m., St. Luke, Bloomsburg

Tulpehocken: February 6, 10:00 a.m., St. John, Northumberland

SYNOD STAFF

Rev. Barbara J. Collins, Bishop
BpCollins@uss-elca.org

Rev. Craig Miller, Assistant to the Bishop/Director of Evangelical Mission
prcmiller@uss-elca.org

Brenda Krouse, Office Manager
Brenda@uss-elca.org

Chad Hershberger, Director of Communications
news@uss-elca.org

The bishop and assistant like to make Sunday and other congregational visits. Here is the schedule:

February 11: Bishop at St. John, Jersey Shore; Pastor Miller at Trinity, McAllisterville

February 25: Bishop at Messiah, S. Wmspt.

Bishop Collins will be in Chicago for the Conference of Bishops from March 1-5 and will then leave directly for Liberia to participate in a Partnership Gathering and Monrovia Women’s Gathering, returning on March 10.

CONFERENCE DEANS

Rev. William Henderson, Buffalo Valley
pastor.celic@gmail.com

Rev. James Park Bricker, Juniata Valley
gymbri@embarqmail.com

Rev. Robert Doll, Middle Creek
prdoll2@gmail.com

Rev. John Koons, North Branch
revjrk@hotmail.com

Rev. Andrew Weaver, Tulpehocken
airweaver@ptd.net

Rev. Theodore Cockley, West Branch
tcockley@comcast.net

CONFERENCE MEETING

West Branch: February 13, 9:30 a.m., Messiah, South Williamsport
MORE MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

- United Lutheran Seminary, located on two campuses in Philadelphia and Gettysburg PA, is looking for a Contextual Education Director. A big part of the job would be coordinating ELCA internships. Please see the announcement here: https://www.higheredjobs.com/search/details.cfm?JobCode=17661820&Title=Director%20of%20Contextual%20Formation.

- The Virginia Synod DEM position is now available. More information is at the ELCA website at www.elca.org/careers.

- The Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago is seeking candidates for Vice President for Administration. The Vice President for Administration is primarily responsible for stewarding the efficient and effective operation of this institution’s financial and physical resources, including those persons employed to serve and support all aspects of its mission. The Vice President attends to this with a significant focus upon preserving the financial soundness of the seminary, while also realizing other missional considerations are relevant. The Vice President serves as strategic advisor to the President and the Board of Directors, recommending the overall administrative goals, policies, programs, and practices that will develop a sustainable economic model for ensuring the long-term viability of the seminary. This position emerges from a reorganization that brings together previously separated finance and operations offices – partly to improve workflows and gain efficiencies, but mostly to seek more unified, innovative, and strategic oversight of the many different institutional resources that support the core educational mission of the seminary. Having recently implemented major improvements in reporting and forecasting (including software, accounting, policy, and staffing changes to support this), but still weathering financial stresses well-known across the field of graduate theological education, we seek a Vice President who can help bring us to the next level of financial responsibility and planning. For a full job description please go to: https://www.lstc.edu/about/resources/employment. Resumes should be submitted to Tom Utroske at Blue Note Search at tutroske@bluenotesearch.com

Announcements

Liberian Partner Synod Announcements
The Upper Susquehanna Synod has come into possession of several very old filmstrips on the early history of Lutheran missions in Liberia. But, filmstrip projector is needed to view them. If there is any congregation that has a filmstrip projector gathering dust in a storage closet, please consider loaning or giving it to the synod office. Contact Brenda at (570)524-9778.

A new congregation--All Saints Lutheran Church-- has formed in Liberia and the pastor, Rev. Tolbert Jallah, has made a request for a candle-lighter and a pouring chalice for the altar. If any USS congregation with extras of these two items and is willing to donate them to All Saints, please contact Bob Bradford at (570)473-9505.

Candles Available
St. John's, Mifflinville has been switching over to Kerry Liquid instead of using regular candles. They have a large inventory of leftover candles and have the following available:
- 1 box blue Advent candles 16” x 1 1/2”
- 1 box used blue Advent candles same size as above
- 1 box 12” white taper candles (12 pieces)
- 1 box white candles 15” x 1 1/8” (12 pieces)
- 1 box white candles 17” x 1 1/4” (6 pieces)
- 1 box white candles 15” x 1 1/8” (6 pieces)
1 box white candles 8 7/8" x 7/8" (9 pieces)
Numerous white candles minimally used
If anyone is interested they can contact the church office at 570-752-2289 or by email at stjohnsmifflin@verizon.net

Upper Susquehanna Synod Events Calendar

February 10, 2018: Disaster Response Meeting
NO EXPERIENCE NECESSARY! Those interested in participating in Disaster Response Work Teams are encouraged to attend an informational meeting at the synod office (500 Reitz Blvd, Lewisburg) on Saturday, February 10, 2017, from 10:00 a.m.-noon. Plans are underway to arrange for up to four ecumenical work trips this year to places such as Houston, Florida and Puerto Rico. For information, contact Craig Miller, Assistant to the Bishop.

February 9-10, 2018: GROW in the Snow
This year's synod youth retreat at Camp Mount Luther will be held on February 9-10, 2018. All youth in 6-12th grade and their youth leaders are invited to attend. The theme of this year's retreat is “Hello God, It’s Me,” dealing with prayer. Experience your Creator, play winter games and find refreshment in the peace of camp in winter. The retreat is from Friday night to Saturday afternoon, but there is an option for youth and leaders to come just for the day on Saturday. Cost is $59 (whole program) or $40 (Saturday only) if registered by January 30, 2017. A late fee of $25 added after that date. No refunds will be given after the January 30 deadline. Each registered group should provide one adult (21 or over) for every seven youth and at least one adult for each gender represented. Cabin assignments will be made based on available adults and number of youth attending. Contact Chad Hershberger at chad@campmountluther.org with questions. Click here for a flyer and registration form: https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2018-GROW-in-the-Snow-Flyer.pdf.

February 11, 2018: Mount Luther Sunday
The Upper Susquehanna Synod Council has designated that Transfiguration Sunday each year be recognized as “Mount Luther Sunday” to help promote outdoor ministries in the synod. Members of USS congregations are encouraged to celebrate outdoor ministries on this day, February 11, 2018. Mount Luther is an extension of the ministry that is done in local Lutheran congregations. The camp asks that congregations promote the camp on that Sunday or designate another Sunday this spring to do so. Ways to promote the camp include bulletin inserts to share with congregation members, Temple Talks, camper testimonials, bulletin board displays, special camp music during Sunday school and church services, as well as special offering being collected. Ideas are available here: https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2018-Mount-Luther-Sunday-Flyer.pdf. For a bulletin insert to put in your church bulletin, click here: https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/General-Bulletin-Insert.pdf.

February 16-17, 2018: Healthy Congregations Facilitator Training
Interested in investing in your own leadership and the vitality of your congregation? Our synod will host a two-day training for those interested in becoming facilitators for Healthy Congregations. This training will take place at the synod office – 500 Reitz Blvd, Lewisburg. Healthy Congregations Facilitator Training provides faith communities with the perspective and challenge that contribute toward health and thoughtful mission and ministry in these exciting and transformative times. An introduction to the thinking behind the workshops will be offered as well as an overview of the resources that facilitators will have access to following the training. Although the registration will indicate that the event is free, the online registration is only to get names and information. Anyone who would like to learn more about
Healthy Congregations, or use this as continuing education, may attend this event for the cost is $45. Those who are willing to serve as a facilitator for the synod will be offered a grant to cover the fee for this continuing education opportunity. When you register, you will receive a schedule for the days and some preliminary materials, as well as a statement of invoice. Registration is available here: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/healthy-congregations-facilitator-training-tickets-40159667647

February 28- March 3, 2018: ALDE IGNITE in Minneapolis
Learn how to take your mission to the next level at IGNITE: Minneapolis 2018, February 28-March 3. This conference will include top-notch keynote speakers as well as rich curriculum sessions and network building opportunities for those with congregational leadership, fundraising, communications, or marketing roles. If you are looking to grow an already vibrant organization, need to reenergize a once-thriving program or are guiding an organization that’s just in its infancy, ALDE is here for you. View the curriculum. Find out more at ignitespark.org. Register now at www.alde.org/register. Early Bird Rates expire January 10. Please note that it is less expensive to become an ALDE member, and then register as a member, than it is to attend as a nonmember. So, you might as well join and take advantage of all ALDE offers year-round. Why ALDE? Click here and find out! Who attends this conference? People just like you who are ready to learn, connect and experience career and mission changing curriculum. In 2017, attendees held such titles as: Pastor, Principal, Board Member, Chief Development Officer, Major Gifts Officer, CEO, Executive Director Consultant, Annual Fund Director, Special Events Coordinator, Director of Marketing, and many more — so you are certain to make a strong peer connection at this event. The conference offers content for every area of the development profession, and for congregational leaders. Can't make it to the full event, or looking to save money? Try the day rate! Attend just one day for a very reduced price. March 1 offers several curriculum sessions designed with pastors and congregational leaders in mind. Topics include: Igniting Donor ATM (Abilities, Time, and Money); Kindling the Spiritual Meaning of Philanthropy; and IGNITING Planned Giving for Churches and Schools. Other days highlight additional focus points. There's even more you can gain from attending IGNITE. We are offering the chance to win a Pro Bono Consultation from Gronlund Sayther Brunkow to someone who is new to ALDE, or has been a member for less than five years. This could be you, but you must attend IGNITE! Learn about the opportunity and sign up now to win at bit.ly/aldegrant (case sensitive). ALDE inspires, educates and mentors the Christian fundraising community to spark generosity for mission. We are an international community of fundraising and communication professionals rooted in the Lutheran tradition of the Christian faith and dedicated to serving God’s people in the church and the world.

March 3, 2018: Jonathan Rundman Concert
Jonathan Rundman, contemporary rock/folk musician, will perform at St. Peter’s Lutheran Church in Lancaster on Saturday, March 3, 2018, at 7:00 p.m. This is part of the Musical Arts series at St. Peter's. Come for what promises to be an uplifting evening of beautiful music. For more information visit https://www.facebook.com/events/343210709443562/. Come back Sunday, March 4th as Jonathan will be helping to lead worship at their New Day service, too.

March 7-9, 2018: Radical Inclusion
Progressive Youth Ministry presents “Radical Inclusion” on March 7-9, 2018. Cost is $199 and will be held at the Montreat Conference Center in North Carolina. Keynote speakers include Andrew Root, Monica Coleman, Ben Connor, and Abbi Long. Preachers include Ashley Birt and Alice Conner. For more information, visit ProgressiveYouthMinistry.org.

“New Tax Law, New Ways to Give” is a workshop that will look at how the new tax laws might affect you. If you currently take the required minimum distribution from an IRA or are a church leader concerned about how the new tax law will affect congregation giving, this one-hour session hosted by our synod’s Gift Planner is for you. The workshop will be presented by Rev. Elizabeth Polanzke, ELCA Regional Gift Planner. It will be held on Sunday, March 11, 2018, at 2:00 p.m. at Camp Mount Luther, 355 Mt. Luther
2018 Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekends Announced
Your marriage relationship is one of the things in life that provides the greatest potential for happiness. Is yours living up to this potential? Please make 2018 the year you resolve to attend a Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend to learn how to maximize the joy and intimacy that God intends for your marriage. The following weekends have been scheduled with one more to be added in Massachusetts in the fall.

- March 16-18, 2018, at Heritage Hotel Lancaster in Lancaster, PA. A newly-renovated hotel, home of the unique treehouse-inspired restaurant, "Loxley's."
- April 6-8, 2018, at Toftrees Golf Resort in State College PA. A peaceful resort surrounded by a golf course and nestled in the woods in the center of PA.
- September 14-16, 2018, at Spruce Lake Retreat in Canadensis, PA. A lovely hotel-style facility in a wooded area of the Poconos, an hour north of Allentown.

Two nights lodging, five 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. To be sure to get the Weekend of your choice, sign up at your earliest convenience by going to the website: www.GodLovesMarriage.org and paying the registration fee 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 724-325-3166 or fjschamber@comcast.net.

March 22, 2018: LARC Luncheon
Our synod has participated in Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic (LARC) dialog since its inception. Together with the Lower Susquehanna Synod, Episcopal Diocese of Central Pennsylvania, and Roman Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg, we entered into covenant in 1993, committing ourselves to “leading the church to greater unity”. The commitments we made in that covenant continue to be lived out in our congregations and in bi-monthly lunch dialogues at the Diocese of Harrisburg Keeler Center. Anyone interested in joining the conversation may attend these lunches – contact Rev. Craig Miller for more information or to be added to the notification list. Dates for 2018 include March 22, May 22, July 26, September 18, November 15.

April 16, 2018: Retirement Planning Seminar
Retirement planning can seem daunting without someone to walk you through it. Portico’s day-long pre-retirement seminar for plan members age 50+ does just that. And it’s coming to your area soon! The seminar covers many facets of retirement planning in understandable terms — from establishing a retirement budget to reviewing health care options. You’ll breathe easier when you know the steps to take to retire with confidence. Take advantage of this opportunity by attending the seminar on April 16, 2018 at Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit, Emmaus, Pennsylvania. Go to https://www.porticobenefits.org/NewsEvents/Events/Pre-RetirementSeminars to register! Cost is $35/person or $70/couple.

April 22, 2018: Camp Mount Luther Spring Open House
Have you ever wanted to see Mount Luther’s site and facilities? Do you miss camp and want to visit in the springtime? Are you interested in coming to camp this summer but want to get more information and see the place first? Well, this is your chance. The Camp Mount Luther Spring Open House will be held on
Sunday, April 22, 2018, from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. You can ask questions, tour camp, and see what it's like to be a camper! First time campers who are not yet registered for the summer and who attend the event can get a $30 discount on their summer registration! To download a flyer for the event, click here: https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/2018-CML-Spring-Open-House-Flyer.pdf.

April 24-27, 2018: Princeton Forum on Youth Ministry
This Forum gathers Christian leaders who are passionate about young people and the church. Youth ministers, Christian educators, pastors, ministry innovators, and emerging scholars from the USA and beyond gather annually for this 4-day event on the campus of Princeton Theological Seminary. This year, the theme is IMAGE. They will explore what it means to practice youth ministry in a visual age. Hear from speakers like Matthew Milliner, Brian Bantum, and Katie Douglass. Renew your energy for ministry as you create vocational friendships, stretch your imagination, and give Sabbath to your soul. For more information, visit http://lymforum.com.

May 2-4, 2018: Bishop’s Retreat for Rostered Leaders
The annual bishop’s retreat will be held on May 2-4 at Camp Hebron, Halifax PA. Rostered leaders are asked to mark their calendars and plan to attend the retreat. More information will be available next month as to the topic. If spouses are interested in attending, please let Bishop Collins know.

May 7-8, 2018: Youth Ministry in a Scientific Age
The youth ministry conference, “Jesus Rode a Dinosaur and other Silly Tales,” looking at faithful youth ministry in a scientific age, will be held on May 7-8, 2018. Cost is $99 and will be held at Colonial Church of Edina in Minnesota. Speakers include Krista Tippett, “Science Mike” McHargue, and Kenda Dean. For more information, visit ScienceYM.org.

May 21, 2018: Lutheran Day of Advocacy
Join Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania and fellow advocates from across the commonwealth in Harrisburg on May 21, 2018, for inspiration, education and participation – in worship, service and advocacy – with a focus on a powerful element in our life together: Water. This year’s theme for Lutheran Day of Advocacy is “Roll Down Like Waters.” We are drowned and reborn in it at our baptism. The promises made at the font recall God’s covenant reminder in Amos to “let justice roll down” like it. And, in Pennsylvania, we are surrounded by it – with more miles of waterways than any of the other lower 48 states. We will consider our response to the status of being the most flood-prone state in the U.S. and the fact that nearly one third of our waterways are impaired. Most importantly, we will explore how we can be church together in Pennsylvania, so that justice might “roll down like waters.” Registration opens in early 2018. Bring a friend – or a team – and join advocates from across the Commonwealth to ground and deepen your call to faith-rooted advocacy.

June 15-16, 2018: Synod Assembly
The 2018 Upper Susquehanna Synod Assembly will take place on the campus of Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, on June 15-17, 2018. Registration materials will arrive in congregations in a few weeks. Special attention needs to be made to the meal registrations. Meal tickets will not be available after the late registration date or at the door on the days of the assembly. And we will again go paperless this year. More detailed information will be provided as it becomes available and will be posted at http://uss-elca.org/assembly. All rostered leaders and voting members from every congregation are expected to attend. Clergy need to write an excuse to the bishop if you cannot attend.