**8TH Seafarers Collection**

Members in 39 synod congregations and one individual filled a total of 670 Christmas At Sea gift bags for the ministry of Seafarers’ International House. The bags are given to merchant seamen who come into port to off-load their cargoes during the Advent/Christmas season.

Two large vans came from New York City to our synod office to pick up the gift bags on December 11th. First-time contributors included St. John, Northumberland; St. Paul, Middlecreek Dam; Himmel, Rebuck; and Zion, Kratzerville. Zion members broke all records with 70 gift bags.

This is a ministry of the ELCA whose port chaplains go aboard ships to distribute the gift bags, conduct worship services, and to offer other forms of assistance and hospitality to the crews. Thanks to all those who supported our efforts this year! This is the largest number of bags collected in the eight years the synod has been participating in this program. In fact, it’s over 100 more than 2017.

**Holiday Breakfast Held**

Camp Mount Luther and Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village in Lewisburg held a “Breakfast with Santa” in December at The Village Common. Children and their parents could visit with Mr. and Mrs. Claus and get their picture taken. They also enjoyed breakfast and could make crafts, including God’s eyes, cereal ornaments, and decorated cookies! The two Lutheran organizations have been partnering for four years on this event, held at Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village.

**Synod Office Holiday Closing**

The Upper Susquehanna Synod Office will be closed from Monday, December 24, 2018, to Tuesday, January 1, 2019, in observance of the Christmas and New Year’s holidays. The office will reopen at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, January 2, 2019. If you have an emergency, please call the synod office (570-524-9778) and the voicemail will give you phone numbers that you can call. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year from the Upper Susquehanna Synod Staff.
New Partnership Shares Space

On November 12, the Milton Lutheran Parish of Trinity and Christ, Milton (Intentional Interim Pastor Mark Galbraith), and the Hispanic Free Methodist Church signed an agreement to share worship and fellowship spaces. Beginning December 2, the Hispanic Free Methodist Church (Pastor Deysi Maria Caraballo) holds Sunday worship services at 11 a.m. at Trinity while holding special events at Christ. Milton Lutheran Parish will join with the Free Methodist Church for a special joint service on January 6 at 9:30 a.m. at Christ, followed by a fellowship banquet.

Pictured are Pastor Deysi Maria Caraballo, Rose Handy, Pastor Mark Galbraith, Jeff Coup, and Pastor Deysi’s daughter, Jaasseil, following the signing of the agreement to share space.

Up and Down the Valleys

Trinity, Hughesville (Pastor Cinda Brucker) held a Roof Raisin’ Frolic this fall. The event featured the talents of the congregation, including dancing, poetry readings, singing, organ performances, dulcimer, and clarinet. They also had a show-stopping duet of Sonny and Cher’s “I Got You, Babe.” Monies raised that night go to the church’s roof fund. The congregation recently put a new roof on their building.

This Fall, the sawdust ministry of Zion, Kratzerville (Pastor Rick White) replaced a porch on an A-frame cabin at Camp Mount Luther. They also patched a member’s cement porch, put in a ramp, and built shelves for the church kitchen.

St. Matthew’s, Shamokin Dam (Deacon Gary Schaeffer) is doing a series of worship services this Advent titled “Won’t You Be My Neighbor?” It is based on the teachings of Fred Rogers of Mister Roger’s Neighborhood.

Under the theme, “Good Works in Grace Spurred in Love,” the director of Camp Mount Luther recently attended the annual Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM) Conference. The event was held at the T Bar M Retreat Center in New Braunfels, Texas, in early November. Chad Hershberger was among nearly 120 Lutheran camp professionals and board members at the conference. This year’s theme looked at how everything we have and everything we are is because of God’s love for us. This love empowers us – it spurs us on in good works to a life of service for others.

In the December issue of Living Lutheran, ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton reflects on Christmas, a time when “God reversed the cradle-to-grave progression.” We are on a joyful journey, where we are loved, we are alive and we are free to greet this holy season. Read her column in English at https://bit.ly/2GeSsaS
December 30, 2018: CML Summer Brochure Release Party

Camp Mount Luther is hosting a new event this year for everyone to learn about their Summer 2019 programs. Everyone, but most especially campers, parents, alumni staff, and potential campers and families are invited to come to this new, exciting winter camp event! It will be held on Sunday, December 30, 2018, from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. in the Evergreen Center. Celebrate the holidays and meet up with camp friends to do crafts, games, singing, eating, and more. Members of the 2018 Summer Staff will lead this program! While the kids are playing with the camp staff, the annual Camperson Meeting will be at 3:00 p.m. A camperson is a liaison between camp and your congregations. They are our ambassadors, regularly promoting camp news. Each synod congregation is asked to send a representative to this event to learn more about Mount Luther! At 3:30, details will be released for everyone about Summer 2019’s schedule and theme. You can get your own copy of the summer brochure and start making plans. You won’t want to miss it! Camel Bucks for the camp store will be given to those who attend this event. Campersons will get Camel Bucks for all those who attend from their congregation! Here is a bulletin insert/flyer: [Link](https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2018-SBRP.pdf)

January 19, 2019: MLK Interfaith Prayer Breakfast

You are invited to the inaugural MLK Jr. Interfaith Prayer Breakfast! Mark your calendars and plan to join us on Saturday, January 19, 2019, for prayer, fellowship and to celebrate Dr. King’s legacy. Should you have any questions, please contact Jackie Curran at jcurran@hbgdiocese.org or (717) 657-4804 ext. 313. It is easy to register: You may complete your registration online ([Link](https://hbgdiocese.formstack.com/forms/interfaith_prayer_breakfast)) or print and mail the registration form: [Link](https://www.uss-elca.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/MLK-breakfast-flyer-form.pdf)

February 8-9, 2019: GROW in the Snow

This year’s synod youth retreat at Camp Mount Luther will be held on February 8-9, 2019. All youth in 6-12th grade and their youth leaders are invited to attend. The theme of this year’s retreat is “The Apps on God’s Tablets,” dealing with the Ten Commandments. 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 $60 (whole program) or $40 (Saturday only) if registered by January 29, 2019. A late fee of $25 added after that date. No refunds will be given after the January 29 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: [Link](https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2019-GROW-in-the-Snow-Flyer.pdf)

February 15-17, 2019: Happening #12

This is a program sponsored by the Episcopal Diocese of Central PA, held at Camp Mount Luther. Because of the synod and camp’s partnership with the diocese, Lutheran youth are welcome and encouraged to attend. All youth in grades 9-12 are invited for an exciting weekend of fun, friendship, and faith! Youth leadership is a key feature of the Happening program. The entire weekend is led “by youth for youth” with adult supervisions and guidance. Happening is not a traditional church retreat. As a Happener, whether you are a high school student or an adult (yes adults may happen, too!) You will have the opportunity to talk about God, as God is reflected in your daily life, with your peers, the people who will be experiencing the same event with you. Happening is truly an event designed with you and your faith in mind! Finally, a key piece to a happy Happening is dedication to a friendly, accepting, and understanding environment. No matter who you are, where you come from, or what your favorite cereal happens to be,
you are welcome with open arms. Please register by February 8, 2019! Click to register: https://tinyurl.com/ycnlgl4q. Cost is $125.00 and scholarships are available. Please contact Mary Ellen Kilp or Theda Tallman at cpayouthcom@gmail.com for questions. Click here for a flyer about the event: https://www.uss-elca.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Happening-flyer-12.docx

March 3, 2019: 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, March 3, 2019. 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/2018/12/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/2018/12/General-Bulletin-Insert.pdf

April 5-7, 2019: New Beginnings #2
“New Beginnings” is a unique ministry of the Episcopal Diocese of Central PA that shares the love of Christ with the middle school-aged (grades 6-8) youth of today. Because of the synod and camp’s partnership with the diocese, Lutheran youth are welcome and encouraged to attend. Throughout the retreat weekend, the high school youth will minister to the middle school youth. “New Beginnings” speaks, listens, and challenges middle school youth to be positive about themselves, their friends, families and their communities, in a critical time in their lives. This ministry reminds them that we are all children of God, we are special, we are loved, and there is nothing that we cannot overcome with Christ. The “New Beginnings” check-in begins at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, April 5th and continues through a special Eucharist at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday the 7th. (The entire weekend concludes around 12 noon). The event is held at Camp Mount Luther. Activities include a series of songs, skits, movie clips, and small group discussions. Topics such as God’s love, prayer, self, friends, parents, siblings, and school is explored with talks introduced by the high school youth and adult members of the team. Cost is $100.00 per participant! That includes housing in cabins with other youth, all meals, a t-shirt and an entire weekend of activities! To register, visit https://tinyurl.com/y78dlyx9. Registration deadline is March 29, 2019. After your registration has been sent in and accepted, you will receive a few additional forms to fill out along with a packing list for the weekend. Please feel free to email or call Mary Ellen Kilp or Theda Tallman at cpayouthcom@gmail.com or 717-475-2785 with questions. Here is a flyer for the event: https://www.uss-elca.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/New-Beginnings-1-Flyer-002.docx
**Holiday Breakfast This Weekend**

Diakon’s Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village and Camp Mount Luther are once again teaming up to provide a fun morning of food, fellowship, and Christmas crafts and games on Saturday, December 8, 2018. The breakfast will feature an appearance and photos with Santa and Mrs. Claus, chocolate chip pancakes, craft stations, and cut-out cookies. Space is limited. Call Gretchen at 570-523-4285 to RSVP. The event will be from 9:00-11:00 a.m. at the Buffalo Valley Lutheran Village Common Building. For more information, visit our website.

**GROW in Snow Theme:**
**The Apps on God’s Tablets**

This year’s synod youth retreat at Camp Mount Luther will be held on February 8-9, 2019. All youth in 6-12th grade and their youth leaders are invited to attend. The theme of this year’s retreat is “The Apps on God’s Tablets,” dealing with the Ten Commandments. 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 $60 (whole program) or $40 (Saturday only) if registered by January 29, 2019. A late fee of $25 added after that date. No refunds will be given after the January 29 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 Hersherberger at chad@campmountluther.org with questions. A flyer and registration form are on our website.

**Summer Brochure Release Party after Christmas**

Want to know everything there is to know about next summer’s programs? Well, come to a new, exciting winter camp event this month to find out. Everyone, but most especially campers, parents, alumni staff, pastors and potential campers and families are invited to our first ever Summer Brochure Release Party. It will be held on Sunday, December 30, 2018, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. in the Evergreen Center. Celebrate the holidays and meet up with camp friends to do crafts, games, singing, eating, Christmas caroling and more. Members of the 2018 Summer Staff will lead this program!

While the kids are playing with the staff, we’ll have our annual **CAMPERSON MEETING** at 3:00 p.m. A camperson is a liaison between camp and your congregations. They are our ambassadors, regularly promoting camp news. Each synod congregation is asked to send a representative to this event to learn more about Mount Luther! If you can’t attend, we’ll have an electronic sign-up for campersons in January.

At 3:30, we’ll release details for everyone about Summer 2019’s schedule and theme. You can get your own copy of the brochure and start making plans for next summer.

Camel Bucks for the camp store will be given to those who attend this event. Campersons will get Camel Bucks for all those who attend from their congregation!

If you want to get some teases about new and returning programs, please check out our Facebook page this month. We’ll post more information there. It’s going to be a great afternoon! Be there!
Annual Conference Gathers Outdoor Ministry Professionals

Under the theme, “Good Works in Grace Spurred in Love,” Mount Luther’s director recently attended the annual Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM) Conference. The event was held at the T Bar M Retreat Center in New Braunfels, Texas, in early November. Chad Hershberger was among nearly 120 Lutheran camp professionals and board members at the conference.

This year’s theme looked at how everything we have and everything we are is because of God’s love for us. This love empowers us—it spurs us on in good works to a life of service for others. Small group discussions occurred as part of the keynote presentations. Keynote speakers included Peggy Hahn, executive director of LEAD, a nonprofit organization focused on resourcing and coaching church leaders who want to make adaptive changes; Steve Baskin, co-director of Camp Champions in Texas and a partner in Everwood Day Camp in Massachusetts and Camp Pinnacle in North Carolina; and Jake Sorenson, founder and director of Sacred Playgrounds, a ministry offering research and training to camps and congregations. The bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America’s Southwestern Texas Synod, Rev. Susan J. Briner, was in attendance at opening worship. Worship leadership was provided by Rev. Heather Hansen and Rev. Ashley Dellagiacoma.

As part of a fairly new recognition program, the Manlove-Howells Leadership Award was presented. It was given to Dick Sayther, one of the founding partners of Grunland Sayther Brunkow, a development and board consulting firm. Camp Mount Luther has worked with GSB on some fundraising activities.

During the conference, LOM, a non-profit organization, met in business sessions. LOM is an independent association of outdoor ministry organizations, professionals, board members, businesses and students connected to Lutheran camping, conference and retreat centers. Camp Mount Luther is a member of LOM.

Straight From the Camel’s Mouth

By Kyros T. Camel

Chad Hershberger

Well… actually it’s Chad Hershberger writing this month. Kyros and his camel friends are busy getting ready for the holidays and he wanted me to write in his space this month. Which is cool, because I wanted to tell you about a new opportunity we are working on at camp.

Mount Luther and Mifflinburg Preschool, housed at First Lutheran in Mifflinburg, are teaming up to provide some outdoor education to young learners. The camp and the preschool’s teacher, Kris Lamey, plan to work together in the future on projects to bring the preschool kids to Mount Luther to learn more about creation and to have me do some camp-style programming in the preschool classroom. I was talking to Miss Kris recently about ways camp and the preschool could work together and we think this is a great opportunity for us both! She’s also willing to come talk to our staff about preschoolers and how to work well with that age group.

Unfortunately, this cannot happen if the school doesn’t get some more students. Their enrollment is down this year and they desperately need more kiddos or their program could be suspended. If you know someone who has a three or four-year-old who lives in the Mifflinburg area who might be interested in preschool, contact Miss Kris at her home phone (570-966-2851) for information or to schedule a visit.

Both of my kids, Claire and Aaron, attended Mifflinburg Preschool. I can tell you they loved the environment there and learned a lot. They made friends, expanded their knowledge, and were very well prepared to go to kindergarten. In fact, when I was in line for my son’s kindergarten registration last spring, a parent in front of me lamented that she did not send her kid to preschool. She felt he wasn’t ready for kindergarten. I thought to myself that wasn’t the case with my kids. They were ready to go, thanks to Mifflinburg Preschool.

I’m excited for the chance to share camp with some young friends and have them experience God in new ways through this partnership. I’m hoping you might be able to help spread the word to get more students for Miss Kris so we can work together and strengthen this partnership between Mount Luther, Mifflinburg Preschool, and First Lutheran Church!