Thank You!

Upper Susquehanna Synod congregations share the grace of God in many ways. Many provide food and clothing for needy families in their region; they share their facilities for community groups and twelve-step programs; and they offer meals to their local communities. In addition to these examples of generosity, USS congregations continue to give generously to ministries of the ELCA. A report from the Mission Advancement unit on the first three quarters of 2018 shows that our synod congregations gave $143,155 to ministries such as ELCA Disaster Response ($30,000), World Hunger ($72,000), Missionaries and Young Adults in Global Mission ($28,220); this in addition to our regular Mission Support designated as 48.2% of all undesignated congregational remittances to our synod. Your generosity helps our church to share God’s good news throughout our nation and our world.

Here are some statistics on mission support giving in 2018:

- Receipts totaled almost $869,000 and were 113% of commitment.
- We exceeded our budget for Mission Support by over $30,000. Discounting a one-time gift of $24,000 from St. Matthew, Williamsport, still has us surpassing our budget.
- Only five congregations contributed nothing for the year.
- Of the 23 congregations that fell short of commitment the total shortfall was just over $18,000.
- Congregations that exceeded commitment added an additional $224,000.

Pastor Goes to Wittenberg

By Rev. Lisa Raylene Barnes, pastor of United in Christ Lutheran Parish, Mount Pleasant Mills and Richfield.

I am honored to have represented the Upper Susquehanna Synod at the 18th International Seminar from Nov. 3-17, 2018, sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Center in Wittenberg, Germany. In all, there were 19 pastors and theologians selected to attend from LWF member countries, including India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Namibia, Swaziland, Madagascar, Mexico, Nicaragua, Brazil, Denmark, Hungary, Czech Republic, Germany, and the US. The seminar was designed to study Martin Luther’s writings; understand the circumstances and relationships in which Luther lived; and relate his insights to the contexts in which the participants live.

Each weekday, we gathered in the morning for instruction and conversation, centered on the theme of “Learning Spirituality with Luther” and led by scholars Dr. Sarah Hinlicky-Wilson and Dr. Theodor Dieter. The afternoons were spent visiting Wittenberg sites, including the Castle Church where Luther posted the 95 Theses. We also met with local dignitaries and church leaders. In the evenings, we gave presentations about our various ministries. Weekends were spent worshiping and visiting out-of-town sites, including Wartburg Castle. On our final evening together, we enjoyed a festive dinner in the style of Luther’s day. It was a packed schedule, and there was very little free time!

I expected to gain new insights in Wittenberg, and to be inspired as I stepped foot in places I’ve only read about. I was not disappointed. But most amazing was the opportunity to meet faithful colleagues from all over the world; hear their unique experiences and challenges; and recognized the many things we share in common. I made friendships I hope will last for many years to come. It was a transformative experience, and I am grateful for it. In years to come, I hope others from our synod will have a chance to be part of this awesome educational opportunity.
LOM VBS Curriculum Available

Lutheran Outdoor Ministries (LOM) produces the curriculum each year that is used in camp and retreat settings and for Vacation Bible Schools and day camps. LOM has released its 2019 curriculum entitled *Transformed Community: God’s Agent of C.H.A.N.G.E.* This curriculum conjures up images of a mighty band of superheroes with secret missions. When we take on the mission of being God’s agent of change in the world, we must be ready to be transformed—individually and together—and to discover that our not-so-secret identities will probably not conform to the world’s expectations. This is not always an easy thing to say yes to, but when the mission is attempted together and in community, we discover that we are aligned with God’s will, powered by God’s spirit, and that there is purpose and joy in being Christ’s life-giving and love-giving presence in the world as God’s hands and feet.

Daily themes include: Generosity Transforms Community (Acts 2:41-47, the early Christian community); Compassion Transforms Community (Luke 14:7-14, the parable of the wedding banquet); Inclusion Transforms Community (Luke 10:25-37, the parable of the good Samaritan); Justice Transforms Community (Matthew 20:1-16, the parable of the laborers in the vineyard); and Forgiveness Transforms Community (Mark 2:1-12, Jesus heals the paralyzed man).

The curriculum is also available in small bundles designed for Youth Ministry and VBS settings. The full curriculum package includes Bible study sessions for Elementary, Youth, and Adult, as well as games, crafts, environmental activities, and team-building activities. *Transformed Community: God’s Agent of C.H.A.N.G.E.* is available for purchase and download on the LOM website at [www.lomnetwork.org](http://www.lomnetwork.org). Lutheran Outdoor Ministries is an association of outdoor ministry organizations dedicated to encouraging, equipping, educating, and empowering bold and faithful outdoor ministry leaders for service in the Church and in the world.

Camp Mount Luther’s website now has information about summer camp programs. Brochures were also mailed to churches and campers from the last two years in January.

Up and Down the Valleys

It was a wonderful worship service at St. Luke, Centre Hall, on a February Sunday morning as they honored the ministries of former pastors, the Rev. LeRoy Reitz *(retired)*, and the Rev. Russ Sauerwein with Pastor Emeritus status. Bishop Collins presided at the Eucharist. Pastor Reitz was the bishop’s field work supervisor in seminary and colleague at Trinity, Milton, following graduation. Pictured here are current St. Luke’s pastor, Becky Horn, Collins, Reitz, Sauerwein, and Allegheny Synod Bishop Michael Rhyne.

**Clergy Notes:** Faron Johnson resigned as pastor of St. John, Delaware Run, effective January 1. He has accepted a call in the Allegheny Synod. St. John, Belleville, voted to call Ela Robertson to be their pastor. Pastor Robertson will also be the pastor of West Kish Presbyterian Church. She was ordained February 3 and installed following her call vote. At their February 16 meeting, Synod Council voted to remove Rev. Stevens Shipman *(retired)* from the roster of the USS and ELCA in response to the action of the NALC installing him on January 20, 2019, to serve St. Timothy, Camp Hill (an NALC congregation) without written permission.

Thad Swinehart, Youth Director at Trinity, McAlisterville *(Pastor Erin Bovendam)* resigned in January. The congregation had a cake in his honor at their annual meeting.

You can help tell the stories of our ministries within the synod. We welcome your submissions for USS Ark. If you have a ministry that you’d like to be featured, please send information to news@uss-elca.org. Pictures are welcomed but please get permission of those pictured before you send it. Thank you for your partnership and for reading Ark!
Upper Susquehanna Synod Events

Conference Assembly Schedule
All voting members to Synod Assembly are expected to attend their conference assembly.
- Buffalo Valley: Sunday, April 7, 2:00 PM, Zion, Turbotville
- Juniata Valley: Sunday, March 31, 6:00 PM, Trinity, McAlisterville
- Middle Creek: Sunday, March 31, 5:00 PM, Salem, Selinsgrove
- North Branch: Sunday, March 31, 2:00 PM, Pine Street, Danville
- Tulpehocken: Sunday, April 7, 1:00 PM, Grace, Shamokin
- West Branch: Sunday, March 31, 3:00 PM, Messiah, South Williamsport

Musicians Wanted
Messiah, South Williamsport, is planning to start a monthly contemporary service, called Renew, on the first Saturday of each month, beginning March 2 at 4:00 p.m. They are also beginning a monthly dinner church that will meet the 3rd Sunday of each month and will be called Messiah's Table. They have several job opportunities for musicians as part of the praise team for the Renew service that they need to fill as soon as possible. Guitarist, pianists, drummers, and anyone else interested in leading contemporary music and traditional hymns with different instrumentation would be welcome. If interest, contact the church office at 570-326-9171. They are paid positions.

Youth Director Sought
St. Luke, Williamsport, is looking for a Youth Director for approximately 12 hours a week. The Youth Director is responsible for nurturing youth and their families to enact the mission of St. Luke to be "the hands and feet of Christ." This person will work with youth in 7-12 grade (junior and senior high school) and will foster a faithful, safe and supportive environment while executing monthly gatherings, service opportunities, and mission trips that are in keeping with the church's mission. For a more detailed job description and/or application please contact Sarah Young, office manager, at info@stlukeluth.comcastbiz.net or 570-323-7309. St. Luke Lutheran/Williamsport is located at 1400 Market St. Williamsport, PA 17701.

Church Organists Wanted
Christ's United, Millmont, is looking for a church organist/choir director for one service per Sunday. Choir practice is one Sunday per month following the worship service. Occasional extra services. Pay dependent on experience and education. They have a Rodgers Cambridge 785 Organ. For more information, call Gary at (570) 768-2781.

Zion, Herndon, is looking for an organist/pianist. If you are interested, please call the church at 570-758-1575.

Attention Married Couples
Time is running out to sign up for your spring Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend! Don't delay--remember that because Marriage Encounter is celebrating 50 years of Worldwide Marriage Encounter, they are offering 50 percent off on all registration fees for 2019! Learn how to create more joy and intimacy in your marriage by attending a Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend! The 2019 Northeast US spring weekends are: April 5-7, 2019 at the lovely Country Inn & Suites just off of Hwy 99 in State College and April 26-28, 2019 at the newly-remodeled Heritage Hotel Lancaster in Lancaster, PA. We are also taking reservations for our fall weekends: October 11-13, 2019 at the Hyatt Place Pittsburgh/Cranberry in Cranberry Township, PA, and November 1-3, 2019 at Hampton Inn Berkshires in Lenox, MA. Please go to the website: www.GodLovesMarriage.org, click on "view all weekends" and select the weekend of your choice to see the very reasonable, group-rate cost for that Weekend. Two nights lodging, five meals for each of you, and all supplies are included, and financial assistance is available for those in need. Simply fill
out the form, and complete your registration with a credit card, or you may choose the option to mail a check. For questions, or if you would like a brochure mailed to you, please contact Northeast US Directors of Lutheran Marriage Encounter, Fred & Julie Schamber, at fjschamber@comcast.net or 724-325-3166. Act TODAY while there are still openings!

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

March 3, 2019: Buffalo Valley Conference Lay School of Theology
This event will be from 2:00-5:30 p.m. at Christ’s, Lewisburg, and will feature workshops and educational opportunities. The conference extends an invitation to all to participate in this day of learning and conversation. Continuing Ed contact hours available for Authorized Lay Worship Leaders. To see the schedule and sessions, click here: https://www.uss-elca.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/BV-Lay-School.pdf. You may direct further inquiries to Rev. John Yost, 570-837-9232, prjohnyost@gmail.com. Freewill offering for refreshment costs. Advanced registration is helpful but not necessary. Call 570-837-9232 or 570-524-9778.

March 5, 2019: Volunteer Chaplain Assistant Training
UPMC Susquehanna’s Pastoral Care Department announces their Volunteer Chaplain Assistant Training on Tuesday, March 5, 2019, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the UPMC Sunbury Hospital in the ground floor conference room (use main entrance, take elevator to ground floor). Topics include: UPMC Susquehanna’s mission, the structure of a pastoral patient visit, assessing a patient’s spiritual needs, patient-centered listening, and when to pray with a patient. Following the training, Volunteer Chaplain Assistants will be scheduled to shadow with their staff chaplains. If you or someone you know would enjoy being a UPMC Susquehanna VCA please contact JoAnn Welch at 570-546-4128 by February 26, 2019, at welchja2@upmc.edu.

March 13-14, 2019: Camp Mount Luther Helped by Raise the Region
Camp Mount Luther is participating in “Raise the Region” on March 13-14, 2019. The event, coordinated by The First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania, helps the community support local nonprofit organizations’ fundraising efforts. FCFP, in partnership with Blaise Alexander Family Dealerships, will be launching the 30-hour fundraising event on March 13 and 14, 2019, starting at 6:00 p.m. on March 13 and ending at 11:59 p.m. on March 14. Blaise Alexander Family Dealerships has donated money that will be used to stretch a portion of donations made to pre-registered nonprofits. Additional monetary prizes and incentives will be awarded throughout the entire event. This program is designed to help organizations, like Camp Mount Luther, kickoff 2019 fundraising campaigns and increase donor bases. Proceeds from this event will go to camp’s Annual Fund, unless a donor gets in touch with the camp office to designate it for another camp cause. How it works:
1. On March 13 and 14, donors will visit www.raisetheregion.org from a computer, smart phone, iPad, etc. to learn more about the nonprofits participating and how their work is impacting our community.
2. You can then make an online donation to support one or more of those nonprofit organizations on the Raise the Region website. Running totals will be shown throughout the day at the Raise the Region website.
3. At the end of the donation period, a pro-rated match per gift will be determined and the Community Foundation will send checks to all participating nonprofits with the amount raised, the pro-rated match, and any EXTRA money from prizes awarded throughout the day. Camp Mount Luther has participated in Raise the Region for six years and has garnered about $82,000 in donations during this event. The camp hopes you will help us to have another successful year!

March 15, 2019: Day of Remembrance Essay Deadline
The Upper Susquehanna Synod Council supports the work of Days of Remembrance, a member of the Association of Holocaust Organizations. Synod Council encourages congregations to publicize the organization’s essay contest, which has a deadline of March 15, 2019. Go to www.daysofremembrance.org/essay-contest for more information. Awards will be announced in early May. There are financial prizes.

March 18, 2019: Meeting on Disaster Response Work Trip
A disaster response work trip to North Carolina will take place on May 19-25, 2019. A planning meeting for anyone interested in attending will take place March 18 at First Presbyterian Church in Milton. Click here for a flyer/more information: https://www.uss-elca.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Poster.pdf

March 21, 2018: LARC Lunch
Lutheran Anglican and Roman Catholic representatives will hold the next LARC Lunch on Thursday, March 21, at that Harrisburg Diocesan Center (4800 Union Deposit Road, Harrisburg, PA). RSVP by noon on Friday, March 15.

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

April 16, 2019: Chrism Mass
The annual Chrism Mass with Renewal of Ministry Vows will take place on the Tuesday of Holy Week, April 16, 2019 at 10:30 a.m. at Camp Mount Luther. Pastors of the Juniata Valley Conference will take leadership of the worship service. Pastors, Deacons, and Authorized Lay Worship Leaders are especially invited to renew vows and recommit to worship leadership. The service will include the blessing of oil, which is used for anointing. All are welcome to attend this service.

April 23-24, 2019: Princeton Forum on Youth Ministry

**April 28, 2019: 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 28, 2019, 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 discount on their summer registration! To download a flyer for the event, click here:  [https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2019-Spring-Open-House-Flyer.pdf](https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/2019-Spring-Open-House-Flyer.pdf)

**April 30- May 2, 2019: Generosity Transformed**
At the Generosity transformed! your mission * your ministry * your money Conference, April 30 – May 2, 2019 in Indianapolis, church and organizational leaders will learn how to energize and revitalize their strategies for faithful generosity by connecting their missions, ministries, and resources. More than a typical workshop-based conference, participants will engage deeply in peer discussion groups and subject-based roundtables to develop practical implementation plans and leave ready and able to help their churches and organizations thrive through transformative practices of faithful generosity. The ELCA is offering a limited number of registration scholarships. Contact Keith Mundy (keith.mundy@elca.org) for information on scholarships and the conference. For more information, visit  [https://stewardshipresources.org/generosity-transformed-2019/](https://stewardshipresources.org/generosity-transformed-2019/)

**May 8-10, 2019: Bishop’s Retreat**
The annual bishop’s retreat will be held on May 8-10 at Camp Hebron, Halifax, on the topic of forgiveness. Rostered leaders are asked to mark their calendars and plan to attend the retreat. Registration information will be available soon. NOTE: A boundaries training will be held the day before at Camp Hebron for those who need that coursework. If spouses are interested in attending, please let Bishop Collins know.

**May 13, 2019: Bishop’s Open Golf Classic**
The annual Bishop Open's Golf Classic is set for May 13, 2019, beginning at 11:00 a.m. at the Susquehanna Valley Country Club in Shamokin Dam. The tournament benefits Camp Mount Luther and the camp’s annual fund. A flyer/bulletin insert containing information and registration form is available here:  [https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019-Golf-Tournament-Flyer.pdf](https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019-Golf-Tournament-Flyer.pdf). The camp’s golf tournament committee is currently looking for hole sponsors, door prize sponsors, silent auction items, and golfers. If you can help, please contact the camp office at 570-922-1587 or cml@campmountluther.org. Congregations are also encouraged to become hole sponsors. Get involved and help our synod’s outdoor ministry!

**May 19-20, 2019: Lutheran Days in the Capital**
Save the dates! Join Lutherans from around Pennsylvania for inspiration, education and participation — in worship, service and advocacy. We will focus on setting bigger, more welcoming, tables in our lives, our congregations, our communities and our Commonwealth. Bring a friend — or a team — so that we might strive for justice together and all might know how good and pleasant it is to dwell in unity! Although Monday, May 20, will be our traditional Lutheran Day in the Capitol, we will partner in learning, service
and fellowship with ecumenical and interfaith partners on Sunday, then gather again in the Capitol on Monday for a joint witness. More details and registration coming soon.

**June 14-15, 2019: Synod Assembly**
The 2019 Upper Susquehanna Synod Assembly will take place on the campus of Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, on June 14-15, 2019. Registration materials will arrive in congregations soon. 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. All reports will again be available online. More detailed information will be provided as it becomes available and will be posted at [http://uss-elca.org/assembly](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.

**July 13-20, 2019: Theological Education with Youth**
This program, sponsored by United Lutheran Seminary, is open to youth in grades 9-12 (completed as of June 2019). The program will focus on how Lutherans read the Bible and engage in response and dialog about our beliefs and how these beliefs meet the needs of our world. Leadership components will build on how to approach advocacy and practice through the Lutheran lens. Registration and more detailed information will be available soon.

**July 14-20, 2019: Theological Education with Adults**
This program, sponsored by United Lutheran Seminary, is open to all people interested in the topic matter. Registrations are available for one day, part of the week, or the whole week. The theme for 2019 will center around Biblical Hermeneutics (interpretation of the Bible and texts) using historical and cultural knowledge, reading through the Lutheran lens. Registration and more detailed information will be available soon.