Introducing A “New” Team

At the synod assembly this June, the Bishop’s Reconciliation Team reported, “We as a team are in a discerning process as well. We continue to search for ways to serve congregations and pastors in a more effective way. We are at one of those points in our history when we want to renew our understanding of who we are and what resources we can offer. We will certainly be in touch with you as those thoughts become plans.”

Well, those thoughts have become plans. As we have ministered among the congregations of the synod, we have observed that congregations that are struggling or conflicted often need resources and assistance that are not typically considered as tools for conflict resolution. So, we have reconstituted ourselves so that we can deal not only with conflict directly but can assist congregations in identifying needs that can be met by committees, task forces and other tools available through the synod. We have compiled a reference so that we can immediately point a congregation to appropriate persons who can immediately respond to the need. For example, often we find that congregations would benefit from an update of the constitution. We would immediately refer them to Rev. Thomas Glasoe, chair of the constitution committee. Or perhaps there is a need for better communication within the congregation. Chad Hershberger, our director of communications, could be of assistance. There are lots of resources available to our congregations, many of which can help with the stresses and discomfort that go along with ministry. We can help congregations discern those needs and resources.

So, we are no longer the Bishop’s Reconciliation Team. We are The Bishop’s Congregational Discernment Team. You can reach us through Bishop Collins, or Pr. Jim Bricker, chair of the team. (Gymbri@embarqmail.com 717 512-1026)

Here is the official description of our ministry:

The Bishop’s Discernment Team of lay and ordained volunteers is devoted to assisting congregations. The Team’s assistance can be in the form of coaching, conflict mediation, referral to appropriate synod resources and guided conversation. The Team encourages congregations to consider well their pastoral and other relationships, past and present, ministry programs and structures, in order to identify ways by which they may reach their fullest potential as God’s people.

Learning More About Transforming Communities

Camp Mount Luther recently ended their summer camping season. Around 500 participants took part in programs during the eight-week session. This summer, 248 campers enjoyed on-site programs including adventure, mini, day, extreme, and family camps.

This year’s theme at Mount Luther was “Transformed Community: God’s Agent of C.H.A.N.G.E.” Campers looked at five Bible stories to see how they can be “superheroes” and change the communities where they live through their actions of generosity, inclusion, compassion, justice, and forgiveness.

Some highlights from this summer included: “Scooby Doo Week,” where campers solved the Mystery of the Swashbuckling Pirate; Fishing Adventure, which went to the Eastern Shore of Maryland to fish; “X-Teen,” LEADS, and interns for senior high-aged campers; “Night Owls” when kids stayed up later each night to do nighttime activities; and Tracks, a week where kids could engage in specialty areas, including nature, water activities, STEM, and music and drama. A Family Camp was also held for participants of all ages. The adult Bible studies were led by Rev. Andrew Weaver of Sunbury. The camp also did several joint camps with their counterparts at Krislund Presbyterian Camp and Wesley Forest Methodist Camp, including CLAWS camp, featuring Crafts, Legos, and Wild Sports and High Adventure which included climbing and rappelling.

In addition to High Adventure, new programs this year included Buffalo Gap Adventure, a camping and hiking trip in the Bald Eagle State Forest; and Paws, where the youngest campers chose from five activity areas to focus their attention during the week.
On Campus: Lock Haven Protestant Campus Ministry  
By Elizabeth Taylor, Campus Chaplain and ordained elder in the United Methodist Church

This past week I had the opportunity to give a presentation at Lock Haven University for an orientation program supported by TRIO. TRIO is a federally funded program for students who are first-generation college students, those with disabilities, and who have limited income. I have done presentations for them a number of times before, and I am proud to be another resource for them. These students in particular are there to learn valuable life skills that will help them succeed in college and give them the best chance of a fresh start in life as an adult. I particularly enjoy meeting this group of students. They always participate and seem genuinely interested in what I have to say.

My presentation is about how they can find resources on campus to support them during their college career, with a particular emphasis on the spiritual resources I offer on campus. I tell them about what PCM is and the values that guide us as an organization. And of course, I tell them about what opportunities we offer throughout the semester.

While my primary goal is to tell them about PCM, the real work begins after the presentation closes. After every session, I have at least one student stay to talk with me privately. They tell me what they are struggling with and I begin the process of supporting them and pointing them to resources on campus. While I may become disappointed at times that I don’t always see how it works out for them, I trust them into God’s hands and know that I have planted a seed in their hearts of compassion and God’s unconditional love that will someday come to bear fruit. It is a small role to play in each person’s life, but it is a vital one.

As part of this year’s synod budget, Synod Council is initiating an appeal for Campus Ministries that the synod supports. To balance the budget and not make cuts to these ministries, council decided to ask individuals and congregations to support the work of campus ministries through this appeal. The goal is $6,000. To contribute to this appeal, please send donations to the synod office.

Up and Down the Valleys

Faith, Richfield (Interim Pastor Paul Kampa), sold bottled water at Richfield’s Dutch Days this July. They have a stand selling the cool refreshment during the days of the event.

Clergy Notes: James Vitale has been called to serve Beaver, Beaver Springs and will be ordained and installed there on October 26. Rev. Mark Galbraith resigned as Intentional Interim Pastor at the Milton Lutheran Parish, taking a call in Iowa. Deacon Gary Schaeffer will begin as interim for the Milton Parish on September 1. Other New Interims: Rev. Justin Lingenfelter is now the interim at St. John’s, Delaware Run. Rev. Charles Hersberger is now the interim at the East Kish Parish (St. Paul’s, Milroy, and St. John’s, Siglerville). Rev. Christine Kirchner is now interim at Good Shepherd, Berwick.

Do you know someone who could serve? Nominate them with the Upper Susquehanna Synod committee recommendation form. As the synod begins in earnest to implement the synod strategy, we need people who can help to develop goals and processes with the implementation team. We also need individuals with skills for funding the plan, which will involve congregational stewardship. And, we need people to help with synod governance and finance. Find the form at https://www.uss-elca.org/committee-recommendation-form/

Know a college student who is attending college this fall? The LuMin Network has a student referral tool to help students connect with campus ministries across the country. The referral site is located at: http://lumin-networkreferral.org/student-referrals.

Submit Stories! The USS Ark publishes stories about ministries throughout the synod. If you know of a ministry that is flourishing, have a resource that others could benefit from, have a question that you’d like answered, or have a call story that you’d like to share, contact us at news@uss-elca.org.
WANTED: Regional Gift Planner - Central Pennsylvania
This position is part of a nationwide network of twenty-two professional Regional Gift Planners. Each Gift Planner lives and works within their assigned territory (home office). The Regional Gift Planner (RGP) is responsible for identifying, cultivating, soliciting, and securing planned and current gifts from individuals in support of churchwide ministries, congregations, synods and other ELCA-related ministries. Gift planners work in partnership with synods, ELCA related organizations and institutions to expand the network of prospective donors, increase support for ELCA-related ministries and present opportunities to invest in the Endowment Fund Pooled Trust. Applications can be submitted through the ELCA job board. Inquiries can be directed confidentially to Gaye Lindfors of Significant Solutions, Inc., the consultant assisting with this search (Gaye@ SignificantSolutionsInc.com; 651-490-9550).

With One Voice and Pascal Candle Available
United In Christ, West Milton, has about 125 copies of With One Voice in storage that anyone would be welcome to have (you know, if they are looking for a change from the green book.) They also have an extra stand for a paschal candle base/stand available that is free for the taking. If interested, please contact the church office at 570-568-2254.

Haven Ministry Seeks Volunteers
Haven Ministries of Sunbury is always in need of individuals or groups of up to four people to volunteer overnight at the shelter from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. It’s easy and a fun way to help out. You can relax, watch TV, and socialize with the clients during the evening. Then you’ll close up the common area and go to bed. In the morning, staff comes in and you go home. You’ll need to answer phones if they ring and take a message. All clients must pass a criminal background check before they come to the shelter which helps ensure your safety. If you would like to volunteer, call 570-286-1672.

Lutheran Marriage Encounter Fall Weekends
Don’t miss your last chance to attend a Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend this fall at the half price registration fee of $50 as we are concluding our 50th year of Marriage Encounter! Gardens and lawns need tending to grow healthy and strong, and so does your marriage! Sign up today for the October 11-13 Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekend at the Hyatt Place Pittsburgh/Cranberry or the November 1-3 Weekend at the Hampton Inn & Suites in Lenox, Massachusetts. Please go to the website: www.GodLovesMarriage.org, and click on your desired Weekend to see the cost for that Marriage Encounter. Two nights lodging, 5 meals for each of you, and all supplies are included. Financial assistance is available for those in need by indicating that at the website. Fill out and submit the form, and complete your registration with a credit card, or you may choose the option to mail a check. For questions, please contact Northeast US Directors of Lutheran Marriage Encounter, Fred & Julie Schamber, at 724-325-3166 or fjschamber@comcast.net.

October 6, 2019: CML Volunteer Brainstorm
Be part of a new camp event on Sunday, October 6, 2019, from 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. at the Evergreen Center at Camp Mount Luther. Everyone, but most especially campers, parents, alumni staff, camp friends, and anyone interested in our outdoor ministry is invited to come to this new, exciting event. Bring your ideas for camp- summer camp programs, fundraising, marketing, facilities, non-summer events, or anything else you think might benefit Mount Luther. We’ll share ideas and organize Camel Crews (task forces) to work on those ideas for the coming year! If you have questions, contact the camp office at 570-922-1587 or cml@campmountluther.org. Download a flyer to promote it here: https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2019-Volunteer-Brainstorm-Flyer.pdf.
October 8, 2019: GROW Writer’s Retreat
Anyone wishing to come and write devotionals for Camp Mount Luther’s First Light Digital Devotions is welcome to join other writers on October 8, 2019. The retreat will be from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the Evergreen Center. It will be a day of writing and sharing resources for devotional writing. You don’t need to stay the whole time! Lunch will be provided. Please RSVP to the camp office at cml@campmountluther.org or 570-922-1587 before September 30, 2019.

October 20-26, 2019: Mission Trip
Upper Susquehanna Synod and the Northumberland Presbytery of the Presbyterian Church (USA) are sponsoring another mission/work trip to hurricane ravaged areas of North Carolina. The trip will be October 20-26, 2019, and the cost will be $100 plus transportation. All levels of experience are needed.

PRELIMINARY PLANNING AND INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS: (You can attend either, or both, or contact us directly if you can’t make either.)
- Tuesday, September 17, 7:00 p.m. at Sharon Lutheran Church, 120 South Market St. Selinsgrove.
- Tuesday, October 8, 7:00 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church, 47 Walnut St. Milton.

For more information, contact: Doug Orbaker at 570-768-6436 or dougorbaker@yahoo.com. For a flyer about this event, visit https://www.uss-elca.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/poster-to-send-out.pdf

October 24, 2019: Religious Security Summit
As we approach the one-year anniversary of the Tree of Life shooting in Squirrel Hill, the Pennsylvania Public Safety Agencies of Governor Wolf and the Anti-Defamation League will be hosting a Religious Security Summit on Thursday October 24, 2019 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at 140 Main Capitol Room (House Majority Caucus Room) – Pennsylvania Capitol. Currently, representatives from the following agencies are being asked to attend and speak:

- Anti-Defamation League
- Pennsylvania State Police
- Pennsylvania Homeland Security
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Secret Service
- Pennsylvania Postal Service

This program is designed to educate religious leaders about the acts of hate directed toward faith communities and related institutions in Pennsylvania and our nation, and actions to protect congregations from acts of hate and violence. This will be a free program for leaders of all faith traditions in South Central Pennsylvania. After this event, there is a plan to move this program to other regions of the state. (This is the first such program). Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania invites you to RSVP to LAMPa@lutheranadvocacypa.org so they can assess the attendance and help organizers prepare.

November 1, 2019: Evening at Shade Mountain to Benefit Mount Luther
Come to Shade Mountain Winery to share fellowship, entertainment, and enjoy locally produced wine, all to benefit Camp Mount Luther. The event runs from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. Entertainment will be provided by KJ Reimensnyder-Wagner, a local musician who sings folk music. The menu will include heavy appetizers, dessert, and one glass of wine per person. SPACE IS LIMITED. Please make your reservations with the camp office at 570-922-1587 or cml@campmountluther.org. If you choose to purchase any bottles of wine that evening, a portion of the proceeds will be given to Mount Luther. We ask all participants to make a donation to the camp that evening, equal or greater to the food and entertainment provided. Download a flyer/bulletin insert here: https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2019-Shade-Mountain-Winery-Flyer.pdf.
**November 2, 2019: Fall Women’s Retreat**
All local women are invited to be participants at the Fall Women’s Retreat sponsored by Camp Mount Luther and the Upper Susquehanna Synodical Women’s Organization. The day-long retreat will feature a presentation led by Rev. Sarah Hershberger titled, “We All Are One in Mission.” The retreat will take place at the camp on Saturday, November 2, 2019. It will run from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The day will begin with refreshments. The cost of $20.00 per person includes coffee and tea, snacks, lunch, and the program. You are encouraged to bring a friend! Registration deadline is October 25. To register, contact Mount Luther, 355 Mt. Luther Lane, Mifflinburg, PA 17844. Checks should be made payable to Camp Mount Luther. If you have questions, call the camp at (570) 922-1587 or e-mail cml@campmountluther.org. To view a flyer/registration form, click here: https://www.uss-elca.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2019-Womens-Retreat-Flyer.pdf.

**November 20-21, 2019: ESC Generosity Next**
"Spiritual Generosity: Offering Vitality in the 21st Century" will be held in November. Some of the questions that will be addressed include:
- What changes have you noticed in your offerings?
- How is the role of offering evolving in worship?
- What new practices can bring vitality to your offerings?

The Ecumenical Stewardship Center (ESC) sponsors this conference in Atlanta, GA, on November 20-21, 2019. In an effort to reach a broader audience this fall, a new format for this conference is being introduced via live streaming at multiple host site locations. Our synod office will serve as a host site. Watch for registration information. For more information about the event check out this site https://stewardshipresources.org/generosity-next/.
Sewer Loan Paid Off!!!

Thanks to the generosity of over 60 individuals and congregations, we were able to pay off the loan on the sewer project in August. Paying it off early as we did, we look to save about $7,000 in interest. In late 2017, the liner of camp’s sewage system was severely damaged by a bear. In addition, some modifications needed to be made to meet state testing requirements. We spent about $100,000 to repair and replace equipment, including costs to haul out waste before repairs could be made and engineering costs. The funds necessary to make these repairs were borrowed from a financial institution and now, that loan has been fulfilled. Again, thanks to all who helped us reach our goal of paying this off early. At this time, Camp Mount Luther is debt-free!

Whoopie Pie Stand Again!

Camp Mount Luther is once again participating in a local festival to help raise funds for the campership fund. The camp will staff a booth at the Selinsgrove Market Street Festival on Saturday, September 28, 2019. The booth will feature the sale of homemade whoopie pies. Volunteers are needed to make these sweet treats, as well as to staff the booth on the day of the festival. If you are interested in donating whoopie pies (of any flavor) or helping to sell them that day, contact Sarah Hershberger at 570-966-9674 or Chad Hershberger at 570-922-1587.

Be part of a new camp event!

Volunteer Brainstorm

Sunday, October 6
2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m. at
Evergreen Center

Everyone, but most especially campers, parents, alumni staff, camp friends, and anyone interested in our outdoor ministry is invited to come to this new, exciting event.

Bring your ideas for camp-summer camp programs, fundraising, marketing, facilities, non-summer events, or anything else you think might benefit Mount Luther. We’ll share ideas and organize Camel Crews (task forces) to work on those ideas for the coming year!

If you have questions, contact the camp office!

Reach 25 Update

This summer, we asked campers to help us raise money for our Reach 25 program, providing campership monies to first time campers. We had envelopes on the window of the camp store, numbered from 1-100. Campers and friends were asked to include the amount of money listed on that envelope. Folks picked their favorite number, age, birthday, an anniversary, or how many years they’ve attended camp. Forty-four envelopes were returned, totaling $1,762. There are still 14 envelopes out there. If you took one, you can still put the amount of money on it and return to help us get more campers to camp! To date, we’ve raise $6838 toward our $12,500 goal.
Learning More About Transforming Communities

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In addition to High Adventure, new programs this year included Buffalo Gap Adventure, a camping and hiking trip in the Bald Eagle State Forest; and Paws, where the youngest campers chose from five activity areas to focus their attention during the week.

Mark Your Calendars:
November 1- Evening at Shade Mountain
November 2- Women’s Retreat
Details on our website and in the next Camel Tracks!

Straight From the Camel’s Mouth
By Kyros T. Camel

What a great night for the third annual Circle of Faith Giving Club dinner on June 9. We had a great turnout to celebrate our partners in ministry and kickoff the summer camping season. Chad Hershberger, executive director, presented the third Cloud of Witness Award to Pastor James Park Bricker. The award recognizes an individual’s time, talent, and treasure to the camp.

Our golf tournament in June garnered just over $16,000 for the camp. Due to having to be rescheduled from a rainy May day, there were a few less golfers this year than usual. Thanks to all who golfed and sponsored this important fundraiser.

The Annual Dandelion Run was held on August 31. A record 209 registered for the 5 and 10K trail race, which is part of the Rocksylvania Trail Running Challenge. Several kids took part in a fun run as well. About $3,500 was raised for the camp that day.

Again this summer, there were several off-site camps at local churches, led by Mount Luther staff. This year, 258 campers were able to experience camp through these off-site opportunities. Off-site day camps were held at Centre Lutheran, Mifflintown; Trinity and Pine Street Lutheran, Danville; Grace Lutheran, Shamokin; St. Peter Lutheran, Kreamer; Emmanuel Lutheran, Middleburg; Zion Lutheran, Turbotville; Bethlehem Lutheran, Fairport, NY; Trinity Lutheran, Lost Creek Presbyterian, Pine Grove United Methodist and McAlisterville United Methodist, McAlisterville; and Zion Lutheran, Sunbury. Staff also provided games at the Vacation Bible School for Messiah Lutheran, South Williamsport.