Advocacy Team Begins Work

The synod launched its Advocacy Team, approved by Synod Council in September, with its inaugural meeting on October 22. Bishop Barbara Collins shared her dreams and expectations for the team, reflecting on the advocacy of synod hunger leaders and hopes that the synod might grow from that to advocate in other areas of ministry as well. Part of the team’s work will be to grow leaders who, in this time of division in the public square, can help the church “fill the space differently.”

“I’m excited that our advocacy team is moving forward,” said the Rev. Lisa Barnes (United in Christ Lutheran Parish, Mount Pleasant Mills and Richfield). “As a people brazen enough to believe in a covenant God, we are making a commitment to be who we’re called to be as a community of the faithful in the Upper Susquehanna Synod. Each of our team members come with unique expertise, and their own passions in specific advocacy areas. My hope is that, with an intentionality to our efforts, we can provide the resources and support our faith communities need to not only continue their service-oriented ministries, but to reform the systems that created a need for those ministries in the first place,” Barnes said.

At its first meeting, the team began a strategy for sharing the stories and insights from ministries of service throughout the synod, as well as educating congregations and communities about systemic issues underlying needs congregations are addressing or might be able to address. Also, in its work, the team hopes to help congregations develop, build and strengthen relationships with community partners, promote civil discourse and connect them with ministries of the wider church: ELCA Advocacy and LAMPA, ELCA World Hunger, AMMPARO, Lutheran Disaster Response, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services and others.

“My, our, hope would be to effect lasting change, not just for one or two, but for all,” Mindy Bartholomew, a lay leader at Trinity, Milton, said. Other team members include Terry Brown and Rev. Karl Runser, both synod representatives on LAMPA’s Policy Council, Rev. John Yost of Christ’s United, Millmont, and Rev. Ted Cockley of St. John, Montgomery, Rev. Craig Miller, Assistant to the Bishop and Director for Evangelical Mission, and Tracey DePasquale, LAMPA Director.

Seafarers Visit

Recently, folks from the Tulpehocken and Middlecreek Conferences wanted to see where all the Seafarer Christmas bags collected by the synod go each year. They took the opportunity to visit Seafarers International House and see the mission that is offered there in the name of God. Twenty members, representing seven congregations, went on a day trip to New York City to hear Executive Director and Pastor Marsh Drege talk about how Seafarers serves over 27,000 people every year. This past year they also assisted 28 asylees seeking freedom from their respective countries. The SIH is also a guesthouse for seafarers, asylees, seeking a home away from home and tourists seeking an inexpensive place to stay in the city. Call ahead for reservations. Check out their website for more information and a virtual tour. www.SIHNYC.org

The group also stopped at Theodore Roosevelt’s Birthplace Home and Union Square, both near the Seafarers House. The rest of the day was open to explore the city. You are probably aware the Upper Susquehanna Synod has collected Christmas Seafarer bags every year to be distributed by SIH at Christmas. The Christmas Bag collection is once again in full swing. Bags are available at the synod office to be filled and returned by early December.
On Campus: Penn State
By Alicia Anderson, Campus Minister
Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State

The words “Spring Break” often conjure up images of sunny beaches and parties. Last March, students from Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State and three other ministry groups went on an Alternative Spring Break instead.

Our “Pilgrimage to the Border” brought us to the US-Mexico border in Douglas, Arizona. Students made connections and heard the stories of this border community. They talked with passionate staff & volunteers serving migrants and refugees through social justice agencies, local church leaders finding ways to care for strangers, community members teaching and advocating on behalf of people in the borderlands, border patrol agents with a difficult job in this complex and conflicted situation, and migrants who had fled homes and travelled long distances in search of a new beginning for their families. We were welcomed with a rich hospitality that transformed our makeshift accommodations into a home.

At the border fence, we prayed. We drank in the context and the contrasts in silence. We prayed for all whose lives are touched by the boundary. On Ash Wednesday, we held a prayer service in the shadow of the fence, reminding each other of our humanity and our mortality in a place where death is all too common. On our final day, we gathered with others at the fence and hiked into the desert to place a memorial cross for a migrant woman near the spot where she died.

Students listened, asked questions, read God’s story, laughed, cried, danced, sang, prayed, and saw God’s presence. They were changed by time in the Borderlands. They learned that there are no easy answers. They discovered that the lives of all children of God are woven together and were reminded that God calls us to welcome the stranger.

Trips and retreats like this pilgrimage provide students the opportunity to step outside their comfort zone, to learn about themselves and the wider world, as well as to see how God is present in surprising ways. Through Campus Ministry, students find God’s presence, God’s calling, and God’s love.

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

The Camp Mount Luther Corporation Board of Directors recently elected leadership for the coming year at their quarterly board meeting. Elected to his second one-year term as president was Rev. William Henderson of Selinsgrove. Elected to her second term as vice president was Nancy Wood of Williamsport. Rev. Andrew Weaver of Sunbury was re-elected secretary of the board while Terry Gardner of Muncy was elected as treasurer.

Clergy Notes: Pastor Lisa Barnes is now interim at Grubbs and Halls, Freeburg. Pastor Ann Zimmerman is now interim at St. Peter’s, Freeburg. At their meeting in September, Synod Council approved a roster change for Rev. Mark Galbraith to On-Leave-from-Call. Rev. Galbraith resigned his call as Intentional Interim for the Milton Parish and has moved to Iowa to serve a Presbyterian congregation as an Intentional Interim. Other changes to share: The Rev. Catrina Ciccone has been transferred to Northeast Minnesota Synod. The Rev. Luther Martell has been transferred to Southeast Michigan Synod. The Rev. David Kingsborough has been transferred to Nebraska Synod.

A Reminder: Bishop Collins started a monthly posting on the synod website about the synod’s strategic plan. You can view it at https://www.uss-elca.org/category/blog/.
Pianist Wanted
Arbogast (Zion) Lutheran, Mount Pleasant Mills, is looking for a pianist to provide accompaniment for our Sunday worship service. Familiarity with Lutheran liturgy is appreciated. There is also the opportunity to provide accompaniment at one of our sister churches on an as-needed basis, if interested. Applicants are invited to contact us via email, UCLPpastor@gmail, or call (570) 259-4473 for more information.

Church Administrator Wanted
Christ Memorial Episcopal, Danville, is exploring hiring a 10-15 hour a week parish administrator. This person must be adept (or trainable) with Microsoft Office Software -including “Publisher” (or similar Lesson Sheet, Bulletin, newsletter, marketing design software). She or he should also be adept at answering phones, interacting with parishioners, guests, and capable of handling a wider array of office responsibilities. They are open to speaking with an administrator/secretary who is presently employed by another parish/church who is seeking additional hours. Contact the church for more information.

November 20-21, 2019: ESC Generosity Next
“Spirited Generosity: Offering Vitality in the 21st Century” will be held November 20-21, 2019. It will be live-streamed at the Upper Susquehanna Synod Office from the conference in Atlanta, GA. This event is for anyone, not just clergy!

Receiving offerings has been an ongoing part of the church’s story, beginning with the earliest scripture texts. Spirited Generosity: Offering Vitality in the 21st Century will explore the history and theology of the offering, its spiritual significance, and how faith communities can continue to make congregational giving a vital practice in 21st-century culture. 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 event will feature these four plenary sessions and leaders:

- Dr. L. Edward Phillips, Associate Professor of Worship and Liturgical Theology at Candler School of Theology, will present an historical and theological review of the offering in Judeo/Christian culture.
- Robert Hay, Jr., Senior Ministry Relations Officer, Southeast for the Presbyterian Foundation, will share about cultural influences on the offering including technology, generational differences, and the current place of church in society.
- Melvin Amerson, Stewardship Consultant for the Texas Methodist Foundation, will give a presentation about the offering as an act of worship, discipleship, and mission.
- Stewardship and fundraising consultant Lori Guenther Reesor will share a presentation on best practices for the offering and how to make the offering a meaningful moment when faith communities gather.


December 2, 2019: Deadline for Seafarer Bags
This is our 9th year of providing Christmas-at-Sea gift sacks for ships’ crews that come into East Coast
ports during the Advent and Christmas seasons. The synod invites congregations and individuals to join together in collecting "Christmas-at-Sea" Gift Bags for seafarers this Christmas through the Seafarers and International House (SIH) in New York City (http://www.sihnyc.org/). Gift sacks, with instructions, are available at the Synod Office. **PLEASE PAY ATTENTION TO THE DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS FOR EACH BAG!** Please make sure you follow the instructions exactly. Substitute items should not be included. **Please bring completed bags into the office ASAP but definitely before December 2.**

**December 29, 2019: CML Summer Brochure Release Party**
Camp Mount Luther is hosting this event again for everyone to learn about their Summer 2020 programs. Everyone, but most especially campers, parents, alumni staff, and potential campers and families are invited to come to this exciting winter camp event! It will be held on Sunday, December 29, 2019, 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 2019 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 2020’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! Promote it by using this flyer: [https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2019-SBRP.pdf](https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2019-SBRP.pdf)

**February 7-8, 2020: GROW in the Snow**
This year’s synod youth retreat at Camp Mount Luther will be held on February 7-8, 2020. All youth in 6-12th grade and their youth leaders are invited to attend. The theme of this year’s retreat is “I Believe, I Do Believe,” dealing with the creeds. 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 $62 (whole program) or $40 (Saturday only). Please register by January 31, 2020. 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/2019/11/2020-Grow-in-the-Snow.pdf](https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/2020-Grow-in-the-Snow.pdf)

**February 11-13, 2020: Ignite the Church Conference**
Are you looking for a continuing ed event to inspire, encourage & challenge your ministry? Would Florida in February be a blessing? Consider attending the Ignite the Church Conference in Orlando, Florida, February 11-13. In addition to four large group gatherings with talks and panel discussions on topics related to Congregational Vitality, there will be 12 intensive electives on a wide range of important topics like Reaching Younger Generations, Expanding Kingdom Impact, Church Renewal and Discipleship, Renewing Music, Vitality through Mission, Engaging Your Neighborhood, Evangelism, Social Justice, and Raising Up and Equipping Leaders. There will also be a field trip to Orlando’s Castle Church Brewing Community, one of the ELCA's newest and most unique mission starts. The $99 Super Early Bird registration rate includes 2 meals and snacks when you register by November 30th. Rates increase to $109 in December and $129 in January. 75 Leaders from 20 states attended last year's gathering. All conference proceeds are donated to the ELCA Fund for Leaders. Last year's gift totaled $2,500. For more information go to [www.IgniteTheChurch.net](http://www.IgniteTheChurch.net) We hope to see you there!
Office Manager to Retire

Linda Aurand, longtime office manager, has announced her retirement at the end of this year. Linda began her work at Mount Luther as a part-time secretary in 1991. She then worked for us part-time and for the Upper Susquehanna Synod. In 1996, Linda took on the responsibility as our first full-time office manager. Linda scheduled retreats, did our financial bookkeeping, and is the friendly voice who answers the phone. While Linda will retire from her current position, she is going to remain as our part-time bookkeeper, working a few hours each week one day per week.

If you would like to send a card or well-wishes to Linda, please address them to Camp Mount Luther, 355 Mt. Luther Ln., Mifflinburg, PA 17844.

Brainstorming New Ideas

In October, we had a new event called the Volunteer Brainstorm. Seven individuals attended and we shared some new ideas that the camp might wish to pursue. Some involved the summer program, another is for a new camp event next fall, and we talked about others we might get involved. Be on the lookout for some of the new ideas in the coming months!

Evening at Shade Mountain

On November 1, we had our annual Evening at Shade Mountain Winery. The night was one of fellowship, entertainment, and of course, locally produced wine. About 70 folks attended. Local musician K.J. Reimensnyder-Wagner provided music including some camp favorites. Toni Gessner, our hospitality manager, provided delicious heavy appetizers and desserts. Proceeds to our annual fund totaled about $3,400.

We thank Shade Mountain Winery who provided wine for attendees and will donate a portion of their proceeds in wine sales that night.

Each year, we have campers fill out evaluation forms to tell us about their week at camp. One of the questions we asked this year was “if I could change one thing, it would definitely be...” Here are a few of the kid’s responses:

- Brunch everyday. –Spencer, 12
- Gaga ball, because I wish I would have won. –Nick, 11
- More snacks, because I wish to eat. –Kaleb, 12
- A bigger pool. –Carter, 8
Plan to Attend the Summer Brochure Release Party

Everyone, but most especially campers, parents, alumni staff, and potential campers and families are invited to come to an exciting winter camp event! It will be held on Sunday, December 29, 2019, 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, and more. Members of the 2019 Summer Staff will lead this program!

While the kids are playing with the staff, we’ll have our annual CAMPPERSON 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!

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

Straight From the Camel’s Mouth

By Kyros T. Camel

It’s been another busy fall at camp. We hosted several weddings and receptions in October. The GROW Writers got together to write our digital devotions. Here are some other fall happenings:

The Camp Mount Luther Corporation Board of Directors recently elected leadership for the coming year at their quarterly board meeting. Elected to his second one-year term as president was Rev. William Henderson of Selinsgrove. Elected to her second term as vice president was Nancy Wood of Williamsport. Rev. Andrew Weaver of Sunbury was re-elected secretary of the board while Terry Gardner of Muncy was elected as treasurer.

About 45 women attended our retreat in November led by Pastor Sarah Hershberger. The theme was, “We are All One in Mission.” The retreat was co-sponsored by Mount Luther and the Upper Susquehanna Synodical Women’s Organization. It was a great day of reflection and fellowship.

The annual synod youth retreat, called “GROW in the Snow” will be held on February 7-8. The GROW Team is finishing up preliminary preparations and more details are forthcoming. It’s always a fun weekend, so get some youth together to come and spend some time at camp. The theme this year will be “I Believe, I Do Believe,” on the creeds.

The camels can’t wait to see everyone at the Summer Brochure Release Party. It’s going to be a great time and you’ll get to hear what’s in store for Summer 2020!