**NEWS, PRAYERS, AND LINKS**

- Prayer petitions are prepared and sent by the Upper Susquehanna Synod Liberia Committee. Please use them in your congregation to lift up our companion synod program; for example, include them in your intercessory prayers, print them in your bulletin or newsletter. [https://www.uss-elca.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Prayer-Intercessions-for-Sundays2.docx](https://www.uss-elca.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Prayer-Intercessions-for-Sundays2.docx)

- The Internal Revenue Service has issued its 2020 optional standard mileage rates. Effective January 1, the IRS standard rate is 57.5 cents per mile driven for ministry or business purposes.

- It’s time to submit the annual congregational reports! Data from these reports is used in the ELCA Digital Directory. It also assists synods and the churchwide organization in monitoring trends and planning for ministry. Easy online filing is available at [elca.org/congregationreport](https://elca.org/congregationreport). If you did not receive your password in the mail, you can retrieve it by calling the synod office. Thank you for your participation!

- Rostered Leader’s Report to the Synod Bishop- Let’s face it, this is probably the form least completed and submitted to the Bishop, ever! So, let’s make it a bit easier. Go to our synod website [www.uss-elca.org](http://www.uss-elca.org) (For Rostered Leaders>Annual Forms) and you will find a shortened report form to fill out and send to Bishop Collins. Or...you can go to the ELCA link as you have in the past, available under the same heading mentioned above, and complete the form they provide, save it to your computer, and email it to the bishop. (Please do not print out and mail the form since the comment boxes do not expand when printing to show your full comment.)

- Congregational Leaders Updated List for 2020- Every year new leaders are elected in some capacity, or the contact information for folks change, which is why the synod office needs to have this updated information. Changes in officers, addresses, internet information – all of these things are valuable for our office to have on hand so that we can be in communication and provide resources to support the ministry of the congregation, its members, and rostered leaders. Please fill out and return this form ASAP.

**MILESTONES**

- **Rev. Dr. Lois Martin** was granted retirement status by Synod Council in November.

- **Rev. Sarah Hershberger** is the chaplain interim now at Trinity, Shamokin.

**PORTICO UPDATES**

Members with ELCA-Primary health benefits can earn up to $200 wellness dollars to help pay for eligible out-of-pocket expenses. Earn $100 wellness dollars each when you complete a physical health assessment or biometric screening, and when you have a conversation with a Portico Financial Planner. If your spouse is covered by ELCA-Primary benefits they can earn $200 as well. Sign in to myPortico to learn more.

If you have ELCA-Primary health benefits, new online offerings provide convenient access to care at your fingertips, whether on the go, in your office, or in the privacy of your own home. Find support to strengthen your emotional resilience, learn new skills, and save on costs:

- **Being** is a holistic, faith-based, educational platform offering expert-led videos on a wide range of well-being skills — such as longevity, purpose, resiliency, and more.

- **Learn to Live** is a self-directed online mental health support program designed to help participants manage stress, depression, social anxiety, insomnia, and substance use.

- **Text-Based Primary Care** is available through a convenient app. 98point6 connects you 24/7 with U.S.-based, board-certified doctors. Receive on-demand consultation, diagnosis, and a treatment plan for $5 or less. Doctors can also prescribe medication (except controlled substances) and order lab tests.
MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES
(Updated January 20, 2020)

Seeking Candidates/Interviewing
• St. John, Delaware Run
• St. John, Montgomery
• St. John, Northumberland
• St. Luke, Williamsport

Served by Interim/Preparing Profiles
• Good Shepherd, Berwick
• Pine Street, Danville
• St. John, Mifflinville
• St. John, Ridge
• St. Mark, Alfarata

Served by Traditional Interim Pastor
• East Kish Parish
• Grace, Sunbury
• Milton Lutheran Parish
• St. Peter, Columbia Hill
• Trinity, Shamokin

Long-Term Interims are listed here:
https://www.uss-elca.org/ministry-opportunities/

CONFERENCE MEETINGS

Buffalo Valley: February 6, 9:00 a.m., St. John, Potts Grove.

Juniata Valley: March 19, 10:00 a.m., Port Royal Lutheran, Port Royal

Middle Creek: February 11, 10:00 a.m., Zion, Kratzerville

North Branch: February 19, Site TBA

Tulpehocken: February 4, 10:00 a.m., United, Sunbury

West Branch: February 11, 9:30 a.m., Messiah, S. Williamsport.

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:

Feb 2: Bishop on vacation. Pastor Miller at Zion, Trevorton/St. Peter, W. Cameron

Feb 9: Bishop on vacation

Feb 16: Bishop at St. Paul, Middlecreek Dam

CONFERENCE DEANS

Rev. Erwin Roux, Buffalo Valley
zionlc39@windstream.net

Rev. Carla Volland, Juniata Valley
vollandcarla@gmail.com

Rev. Stina Schaeffer, Middle Creek
stinaschaeffer@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

Upper Susquehanna Synod
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Support the Seminary in March
At their meeting in September, Synod Council passed a resolution to encourage congregations to designate a Sunday in the month of March for a special appeal for giving to United Lutheran Seminary. Our synod has several candidates in candidacy who are attending ULS. We may have up to 14 in the coming year and council felt the need to support the seminary with this appeal.

Grants Available
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry of PA wants congregations to be aware of a new grant application that is available for non-profits, that includes houses of worship. Governor Wolf announced the availability of $5 million in funding for security enhancement projects for nonprofit organizations serving diverse communities throughout Pennsylvania and non-profits that principally serve individuals, groups or institutions that are included within a bias motivation category for single bias hate crime incidents as identified by the FBI’s 2017 Hate Crime Statistics publication. The non-profit security grant applications are available now and will be accepted through February 14, 2020. Applicants can find the application and information about the Program on PCCD’s website. Grant awards can range from $5,000 to $150,000 for a wide variety of eligible items, including:
- Safety and security planning and training;
- Purchase of safety and security equipment and technology;
- Upgrades to existing structures that enhance safety and security;
- Vulnerability and threat assessments.

2020 Lutheran Marriage Encounter Weekends Announced
Your marriage relationship is something that provides the greatest potential for happiness. Is yours living up to this potential? Please make 2020 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 Northeast US Weekends have been scheduled:
- **May 1-3, 2020** at Heritage Hotel in Lancaster, PA. A recently-renovated hotel, home of the unique, treehouse-inspired restaurant, "Loxley's."
- **October 2-4, 2020** at Comfort Inn Latham-Albany North--just 10 miles north of Interstate 90 near Albany, the vibrant capital of NY.

Please go to the national website: [www.GodLovesMarriage.org](http://www.GodLovesMarriage.org) to see the very reasonable group rate for each Weekend. You may make your payment for the cost for your lodging and 5 meals for each of you plus the registration fee with your credit card, or you may mark the option to send a check. Scholarships are available for those in need who request them at the website. Registrations are limited by the size of the conference rooms, so to be sure to get the Weekend of your choice, sign up at your earliest convenience at [www.GodLovesMarriage.org](http://www.GodLovesMarriage.org). For questions please contact Northeast US Directors of Lutheran Marriage Encounter, Fred & Julie Schamber, at fj schamber@comcast.net or 724-325-3166.

February 1, 2020: Church Leader’s Day
A Church Leader’s Day for all congregation council members and rostered leaders will be held on February 1, 2020, at Christ’s Lutheran Church, Lewisburg, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. New to council? Get off to a good start with spiritual grounding and practical tools. Been on council often and for a long time? Refresh yourself and your practices for a deeper ministry of the church together. Workshops include Vision and Discernment, Church Finances, Church Constitution, Effective Meetings, Church Technologies,
Synod Resources, Committees and Policies. We welcome anyone interested in coming. The fee is $10 per person. Any questions can be directed to Pastor Tom Glasoe at secretary@uss-elca.org. Here is the link for registration: https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/1087053. A flyer is available here: https://www.uss-elca.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/churchleadersday.pdf

**February 4-5, 2020: Sharing the Gospel in the “Age of the Spirit”**
WV-WMD is offering an event this February, titled, "Sharing the Gospel in the 'Age of the Spirit,'" with The Rev. Dr. Cheryl Peterson. It will be held February 4-5 at Mary Help of Christians in Huttonsville, WV. Peterson serves as Professor of Theology and also as Associate Dean for Academics, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Capitol University. She also serves on the International Lutheran-Pentecostal Dialogue. Peterson will bring both her expertise as a scholar and an ecumenist to explore a range of pneumatological issues, including Charismaticism and Pentecostalism. Peterson's proposed outlines includes:

- Living as Lutherans in the "Age of the Spirit" in a time of "religious decline"
- What Lutherans can learn from the rise of the "Spiritual, but not religious"
- What Lutherans can learn from the rise of Pentecostalism and charismatic movements
- New directions for Lutheran pneumatology, ecclesiology, and mission

There is also a boundaries training pre-event. They may be taken as a combo or either one individually. Registration deadline is close of Sunday, January 19. Folks from other judicatories (Lutheran and non-Lutheran) are welcome. This event is for clergy and seminarians. Details at http://wvwmd.org/clergy/index.html. Facebook events postings at

https://www.facebook.com/events/2175409562767461/
https://www.facebook.com/events/2567991840097621/

**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

**February 8, 2020: Youth and Young Adult Ministry Summit**
A Youth and Young Adult Summit will be held on Saturday, February 8, 2020, from 9:00 am to 2:30 pm at Camp Mount Luther. This will coincide with the GROW in the Snow Youth retreat. Lunch is included and you are invited to stay for closing worship with the Youth Retreat. There is no cost to attend this event. We will be exploring ways to engage youth and young adults to become leaders in our churches and present Growing Young, a strategy from the Fuller Youth Institute to involve youth and young adults within all areas of our congregations and ministries. We are also looking forward to having you share your ideas and how we can collaborate and support each other in this common mission of accompanying youth and young adults in their faith journeys. (For information on Growing Young go to www.fulleryouthinstitute.org.) Register online at https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/1059905. Deadline for registration is January 31, 2020. For more information, email bingaman.sherry@gmail.com.

**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  We hope to see you there!

February 14-16, 2020: 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. You will have the opportunity to talk about God 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! No matter who you are, where you come from, or what your favorite cereal happens to be, you are welcome with open arms. To register, go here: http://www.cvent.com/events/happening-13/event-summary-734f054bc9ff4373aedda26f0ea05175.aspx?fp=true. Click to register: https://tinyurl.com/ycnlgl4q. Cost is $125.00 and scholarships are available. For questions, contact cpayouthcom@gmail.com

February 23, 2020: 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 23, 2020. 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/2019/12/Mount-Luther-Sunday-Flyer-2020.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 11-12, 2020: Camp Mount Luther Helped by Raise the Region
Camp Mount Luther is participating in “Raise the Region” on March 11-12, 2020. 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 starting at 6:00 p.m. on March 11 and ending at 11:59 p.m. on March 12. 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 2020 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 11 and 12, 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 seven years and has garnered about $100,000 in donations during this event. The camp hopes you will help us to have another successful year!

March 28, 2020: “Celebrating Your History ... For the Future”
The Lutheran Historical Society of the MidAtlantic is offering “Celebrating Your History ... For the Future” on Saturday, March 28, 2020 at the Gettysburg campus of United Lutheran Seminary. This Congregational Heritage Workshop will be a day of educational sessions on keeping archives, planning major anniversaries, writing meaningful history, and much more. If your congregation is preparing to celebrate a major anniversary, if you’re interested in what to archive and how, or you’re just interested in congregational history, this event is for you! The day will last from 8:30 AM and end at 3:00 PM with the recognition of Linwood House (where both Gettysburg College and Gettysburg Seminary were begun) as a historical site. Registration cost is $50 for the first registrant from a congregation and $40 for each further registrant from a congregation; LHS/MA receive a $5 discount. More information and registration is available at the Society’s website: https://www.lutheranhistoricalsociety.com/

April 7, 2020: Chrism Mass
The annual Chrism Mass with Renewal of Ministry Vows will take place on the Tuesday of Holy Week, April 7, 2020. Details will soon be announced. 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 and everyone is welcome.

May 6-8, 2020: Bishop’s Retreat
Online registration is now open for the 2020 Bishop’s Retreat. All rostered leaders are invited to join Bishop Collins May 6-8 at Camp Hebron in Halifax, PA. Nestled along the Appalachian Trail just north of Harrisburg, they have 340 acres of wooded sanctuary. Camp Hebron is only 8 miles northeast from the bridge at Duncannon and just a few miles from the junction of Routes 147 and 225 south of Halifax. Register before March 1 and receive a 10% discount. Use code RENEWAL on the registration page. Find information on the Bishop’s Retreat at https://www.uss-elca.org/event/bishops-retreat-3/

May 18, 2020: Lutheran Day at the Capital
Lutheran Day at the Capital is set for Monday, May 18, 2020. Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in PA invites you to save the date and start promoting the event in your congregation. Bring your faith to the table and join Lutherans from around the state for worship, learning, advocacy and action. Learn more at https://www.lutheranadvocacypa.org/event/save-the-date-for-lutheran-day-2020-bring-a-team/