Thank You!

When we speak of the Upper Susquehanna Synod we speak of our congregations and members working in partnership with each other to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in our Susquehanna Valley. Together we are synod, United, Supporting, and Serving. A sign of our commitment to one another and to the Gospel is our Mission Support. These contributions, shared by congregations from their Sunday collections, along with giving by our members to ministries of the ELCA, compound our impact in the world.

Thank you to our 120 congregations who contributed Mission Support in 2019. Together you gave $776,574 to support the mission of our synod. Contributions in 2019 exceeded commitments by almost $75,000 and fell short of our budget by slightly over $10,000.

In addition to Mission Support our synod gave almost $100,000 to support ELCA ministries: $21,600 for ELCA Global Missions, almost $46,000 for Hunger, and $27,000 toward other ministries.

The generosity in our congregations enables us to share the love of God beyond our congregations. For more on what Mission Support does check out Stories of Faith in Action and Where Your Offering Goes on the ELCA website (www.elca.org).

YAGM Participant Reflects on Year Abroad

by Tara Barnard, of Trinity, McAlisterville, who spent a year in YAGM

Young Adults in Global Mission, or YAGM for short, is a mission of the ELCA. Each year through the YAGM program the ELCA sends out almost 80 young adults ages 21-29 to various countries around the world to work in tandem with the ELCA’s counterparts in those countries. Through this program I spent the past year in Buenos Aires, Argentina working at El Arca, an organization for adults with special needs, and Santo Sacramento, a Lutheran church nearby.

I could fill articles upon articles with the differences between Argentina and the United States, but I could also fill articles upon articles with the similarities. In the end, I learned thousands of life lessons. I would love to fill pages and have good conversation about the church in Latin America, about living with adults with disabilities, about the power dynamics and relationships between the United States and other countries. The model of mission of the ELCA and the YAGM program is accompaniment. My definition of accompaniment is doing life together and walking side by side. I have many stories full of beauty and pain as I lived out this model in the past year. I will leave you with one story that embodies the spirit of my year.

Osvi is seventy years old and sits at the head of the table during dinner. He uses his own form of sign language to communicate, along with some partial words. Marcos sits to Osivi’s right at dinner. He is nineteen years old and blind. Marcos is sitting at the table when Osvi arrives, making car noises as he pushes his walker down the hallway and into the dining room. Everyone quiets down a little and Marcos can tell Osvi must be talking with his sign language. Marcos says “Osvi, que haces con tus manos?” Osvi, what are you doing with your hands? He says it two or three times. Marcos reaches out to feels Osvi’s hands. Osvi does his sign language with Marcos feeling his hands and at the same time adds partial words to help Marcos understand. They both get excited as they begin to understand each other. Osvi is almost singing with his partial words, and Marcos is grinning ear to ear. I wish you could have seen the joy radiating from the two of them. It took time, and work, but they overcame the barriers between them to communicate.
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 2020 curriculum entitled From Generation to Generation.

With this curriculum, campers and their leaders will explore the stories of familiar Bible characters and their responses to God’s call and promised faithfulness in the midst of life’s unpredictability and challenges. The promises of God, first made to Abraham and Sarah, include a place to live, a purpose to live out, and a posterity to carry on God’s promises to all future generations. Freed from fear, we step out, trusting that missteps will not destroy us, that God’s guidance will take us where God has called us to go, creating relationships based on care and compassion. From Generation to Generation focuses on how the enduring love instilled in the promise to Abraham and Sarah continue through Old Testament characters, to Jesus, to the early church, and on to YOU! God’s love endures forever – From Generation to Generation! Daily themes include Abraham and Sarah; Joseph; David; Mary; and Paul, Timothy, and Lydia.

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.

From Generation to Generation is available for purchase and download on the LOM website at www.lomnetwork.org under the “resources” tab. 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

St. John’s, Delaware Run (Interim Pastor Justin Lingenfelter) held a pork and sauerkraut dinner on January 23.

Clergy Notes: Rev. Dr. Lois Martin was granted retirement status by Synod Council in November. Rev. Sarah Hershberger is the chaplain interim now at Trinity, Shamokin.

St. John’s, Lewistown (Pastor Jeri Carlin) and St. Mark’s Episcopal, Lewistown (Father John Harwood), worshiped together in a joint ecumenical service on Epiphany 2020. It was a meaningful event with youth & children’s drama and special music, Father Harwood preaching, and Pastor Carlin presiding communion. This was a blessed evening of unity, worship of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the beginning of an annual event for both congregations.

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 sending. 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 26, 2:00 p.m., Zion, Turbotville
- Juniata Valley: Sunday, April 26, Evangelical, Reedsville.
- Middle Creek: Sunday, April 26, St. Matthew, Shamokin Dam.
- North Branch: Sunday, May 3, St. Peter, Grovania, 2:00 p.m.
- West Branch: Sunday, April 26

LBWs Available
Holy Spirit, Turbotville, would like to donate their set of LBWs, which are no longer being used in their church, to any congregation that is in need of hymnals. The set includes the following:
- 1- Altar Edition
- 1- Organist Edition
- 1- Organist Liturgy Edition
- 25- Congregational Edition
- 22- Select Hymns Supplement
- 118- Vigil of Easter Service w/ Organist Edition
- 22- Holy Communion Setting 2 (Contemporary Worship)
- 3- The Service – A Holy Conversation

If there are any congregations that are in need of any of these, please contact Jonathan Moser at jmoser00@gmail.com or 570-412-0127.

Search for Host/Hostess
The Lutheran Chautauqua Association is in search of their next Host/Hostess for The Lutheran House at Chautauqua, New York. The position begins January 1, 2021. If you might be interested in applying for this position, or can refer potential candidates, please send information to Kathy Green, Co-Chair, Personnel Committee at kegreentan@yahoo.com. The position can be filled by a couple or a single person who has a desire to be involved in the operation of and guest reservations for the House. The Host/Hostess will have a private room and bath. They will also have their gate passes and parking paid for by the Lutheran Chautauqua Association. The position will involve approximately 13 weeks in residence during the summer at Chautauqua and managing reservations in the off season. More at www.lutheranhouse.org.

Young Adults Wanted
LEVN, the Lutheran Episcopal Volunteer Network, is looking for young adults (age 21-30) for an 11-month program of non-profit volunteer service and learning about social justice. From the end of August 2020 to the end of July 2021, our corps members will be provided housing, utilities, health coverage, spiritual direction, and a $535/month living stipend. We also offer a $1000 re-entry grant at the completion of the program. The placement sites for the upcoming program year include faith-based non-profits, secular non-profits, congregations, outdoor ministry, and our campus ministry at UC Davis. These service sites address issues of homelessness, food insecurity, unemployment, children and youth ministries, and other important social justice issues facing our communities. They gather each week for evening prayer, dinner, and formation. The corps members live in intentional community in an apartment attached to our campus ministry center in Davis, CA. They are an ecumenical program in the Episcopal Service Corps network; applicants needn't be either Lutheran or Episcopal to apply—interest in Christian spirituality is the only expectation. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis until July 31, 2020. Visit levn.org or contact Program Director Casey Dunsworth at 530-756-1550 or pastor@thebelfry.org for more information!
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 fjschamber@comcast.net or 724-325-3166.

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](https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Mount-Luther-Sunday-Flyer)
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 15, 2020: Buffalo Valley Conference Lay School of Theology
This event will be from 2:00-5:30 p.m. at United In Christ, West Milton, and will feature workshops and educational opportunities surrounding scripture, sacraments, and current events. Each workshop session will feature four workshops and there will be two time slots. Between sessions, Holden Evening Prayer will be done. 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. 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 21, 2020: “Weaving Memories and Making Stories: Reframing, Reclaiming and Proclaiming With Art”
Led by Rev. Lori Kochanski at Susquehanna University, the day will include formal presentation, conversation and prayer. Participants will also practice using art in the work of spiritual formation. In particular, learning more about storytelling and weaving. Participants will need to bring 1-3 items of clothing that they no longer wear, but they keep because the item has sentimental value. This clothing will be used in a piece of woven art. This an intergenerational program and is suitable for adults and confirmation age youth who are 13 or older. Registration will be available on the USS website and is limited to 36, so register early.

Brief Biography:
Pastor Lori Kochanski is a pastor in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), an artist and a spiritual director. Pastor Kochanski currently lives in Albany where she has a fiber arts studio called “The Riparian Zone” (riparianzonestudio.com). She also serves as the Assistant to the Bishop for Faith Formation in the Upstate New York Synod of the ELCA. Lori has a Bachelor of Arts from Susquehanna University and a Masters of Divinity from Yale Divinity School.
March 21, 2020: Faith, Hope & Love

Building Safer and More Welcoming Congregations for LGBTQ+ Youth

The subtitle says it all: this is a day to help equip congregations around issues of safety and welcome for LGBTQ+ youth! This is an event for Senior High Youth, Pastors, Youth Leaders, Parents, and other Congregational Leaders. Faith, Hope & Love 2020 will be held March 21, 2020, at St. Paul Lutheran Church, Hainesport, NJ. The cost: $20 (Scholarships available). For more information, visit https://1b825a80-a708-400a-b161-63a929d4ef02.filesusr.com/ugd/6a8946_c2c0ea425b0346f5b184d4a7d8fc1c94.pdf

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/

March 30 - April 3: Immigration Law Training

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), in collaboration with World Relief, is offering an intensive five-day Immigration Law training March 30 (all day) through April 3 (all day), 2020. The training is being held at the MCC Welcoming Place, Akron, PA. The training will be conducted using the curriculum of the Immigrant Legal Resource Center (ILRC). This course will help to provide the necessary training component for individuals who wish to apply for accreditation from the Department of Justice (DOJ – formerly known as BIA recognition and accreditation). DOJ recognition and accreditation allows non-attorneys working at non-profit organizations to practice immigration law. The course will touch on all areas of immigration law and practice focusing on topics most relevant to those serving and representing low-income immigrants. Due to the requirements of the recognition and accreditation application process, we recommend that only individuals with U.S. citizenship, lawful permanent residence, or other long-term immigration status apply for this training. Additional requirements for applying for Department of Justice (DOJ) recognition and accreditation will be discussed during the training week. Learn more and register: https://mcc.org/get-involved/events/immigration-law-training

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, at Follmer Lutheran Church with worship at 10:30 am. All are invited— including rostered and lay leaders and members of congregations. The service will include the blessing of oil. Lunch will be provided for those who register their attendance with a free will offering taken.

May 2, 2020: Creating Healthy Boundaries

The Northumberland Presbytery is hosting a boundary training event from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. on May 2, 2020, at the Montoursville Presbyterian Church. Cost is $30 per person and snack and lunch are provided. Registration is required in advance and the deadline is April 25. Make reservations by contacting the Presbytery Office at 570-368-3906 or presbynorth@comcast.net
May 3, 2020: 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, May 3, 2020, 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/2020/01/2020-Spring-Open-House-Flyer.pdf

May 6-8, 2020: Bishop’s Retreat

Reflection, Rest, and Renewal: A time away along streams of living water

Camp Hebron (www.campherebron.org) 957 Camp Hebron Road, Halifax PA 17032

The Bishop’s Retreat for 2020 will be held 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. We will stay in the Sylvan View all-in-one retreat center, which features 35 comfortable motel-style rooms accommodating up to 4 people each. There is a private bath in each room and linens are provided. The camp has hiking and walking trails for various abilities. Other possibilities include walking the Prayer Labyrinth, a full-size gymnasium, bike riding, and sitting by a campfire.

Our Retreat begins on May 6 at 9:30am and concludes at 11:30am on May 8. The agenda includes worship, prayer, group discussions, conversation with the bishop, and plenty of time for personal and group reflection and recreation. You will have opportunities for spiritual direction and massage at an additional cost. This year we will be joined by colleagues from Lower Susquehanna and Allegheny Synods.

Jn 7:37b “Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, ‘Out of the believer’s heart shall flow rivers of living water.’”

How do you make space for creativity and imagination? Are there practices that you can experience that will allow you to make space for inspiration and writing? Are there ways to dialogue with a scripture text that will open you to the movement of the Spirit to spark your own creativity in inviting others to hear the word of God’s promises in Christ along with you. We want to invite you to a time away for reflection, rest, and renewal that will have a two-track approach to opportunities for experiencing creative, reflective writing and poetry and concrete dialogues with texts for deepening approaches to preaching and teaching. We are pleased to welcome Rev. Kevin Shock from the Allegheny Synod to facilitate the track on dialogues with the text. Kevin is one of the contributors to the Sundays and Seasons and has a passion for thinking deeply about scripture texts. Barb Debski and Rev. Robert Doll will facilitate the creative writing track as ones who have a love for poetry and the spiritual practice of writing.

Cost for registration by April 15, is $310 single; $200 double; $70 commuter. Registration before March 1 will receive a 10% discount – use code RENEWAL. Online registration is now open!

To pay by credit card use this link: https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/1170589
To pay by check (to Upper Susquehanna Synod) use this link: https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/1170642. (Before March 1 make check out for $279, $180, $63 respectively)

Click here for a schedule

May 11, 2020: Bishop’s Open Golf Classic

The annual Bishop Open’s Golf Classic is set for May 11, 2020, 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/2020/02/2020-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-
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/.

June 12-15, 2020: Naming Project Adult Camp
July 26-31, 2020: Naming Project Youth Camp
The Naming Project, a leading LGBTQ youth and faith-based organization, has announced its first-ever summer camp for adults taking place from June 12-15 at Bay Lake Camp in Deerwood, MN. After fifteen successful summers providing a place for LGBTQ youth to explore their identities and religion, The Naming Project will expand to serve adults over 21. The expansion comes after years of adult interest in The Naming Project and will serve as a fundraiser for the ongoing ministry of The Naming Project, benefitting the youth camp as well as consultation for LGBTQ-inclusive youth ministry. To learn more, visit: https://www.thenamingproject.org/adult-camp/. The theme for the inaugural adult camp is ‘Believe the Truth.’ Campers will explore the beautiful truth about who they are, and reveal the truth of God’s love to the rest of the world. Camp-goers will experience large and small group conversation, personal quiet time as well as campfires, crafts, swimming, games, and summer camp fun.

The Naming Project also announced that it will hold its trademark youth camp from July 26-31. The youth camp is designed for 14-18 year-olds or those who have completed 8th-12th grades who are of any sexual orientation or gender identity or expression. Campers are interested in discussing and understanding sexuality and gender in terms of their own spiritual journey and are excited to spend time with other teen campers and staff while canoeing, swimming, hiking, singing, doing arts and crafts. Since its founding, The Naming Project Summer Camp has hosted over 200 campers from 21 states and was the focus of the award-winning documentary ‘Camp Out.’ For more information on the youth camp, visit: http://www.thenamingproject.org/summer-camp.

June 19-20, 2020: Synod Assembly
The 2020 Upper Susquehanna Synod Assembly will take place on the campus of Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, on June 19-20, 2020. Our ELCA Representative will be Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, Presiding Bishop. 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. 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. Visitors are always welcome and encouraged to attend.