Change of Weather Pushes for Change in Worship

How often in the past have we asked the pastor – “Can’t we worship outside today, it’s so beautiful?” These past summer months, we have been able to do just that and enjoy some beautiful Sunday services outside in picnic groves, parking lots and parks. But the weather is changing and those outside options are coming to an end. Time to move indoors – but how?

A number of our congregations have been worshipping indoors for some time, and they are doing this safely. Doors are propped open, seating is spread out so that physical distancing is observed, and hand sanitizer is available. The service itself is shortened and handling hymnals is eliminated by providing other resources for worship. Musicians play hymns, humming replaces singing, and people wear masks. These are just some of the main precautions listed in our guidelines for resuming in-person worship.

Concerns are heightened when it is discovered that precautions are not being taken, and we have a few congregations who are not following these guidelines. Some of these congregations are on the stated supply list of the synod – meaning that retired Pastors and Authorized Lay Worship Leaders are scheduled there, week after week, to lead worship. When congregations do not follow safe practices, they place anyone who comes to worship at risk. This is not acceptable. Congregations need to be safe places. We cannot put each other at risk, we cannot put our supply preachers at risk.

With the change of weather, let’s all have a change of heart and do what is right...and that means doing all we can to make our sanctuaries safe places to worship for the sake of all.

On our synod website (www.uss-elca.org), you will see a COVID-19 page with multiple resources from the CDC, the ELCA, suggestions for safe worship practices and ideas for creative worship. Please refer to these and follow these precautions for the sake of all.

A Synod First: Pandemic Parking Lot Ordination

Gary Schaeffer was ordained in the ministry of Word and Sacrament at a parking lot worship service on Sunday, September 6. Schaeffer has been a vicar in our synod for the past few years, serving St. Matthew’s, Shamokin Dam, and the Milton Lutheran Parish (Trinity and Christ, Milton). He was an ELCA Deacon before his ordination. Upon graduating from United Lutheran Seminary, he was called to serve the Milton Lutheran Parish full-time and had his ordination in this unique way. Members of the parish and others gathered beforehand for a tailgate at Christ, Milton. Bishop Barbara J. Collins ordained Schaeffer. His wife, Rev. Stina Schaeffer (Salem, Selinsgrove) preached. In addition to a sound system, listeners could tune into an FM radio station to hear the service in their cars. Instead of clergy laying hands on the ordinand, they held a red ribbon that connected them and Schaeffer.
New Appeal for Liberia

The synod recently received Rev. Brian Palmer’s October newsletter “Trying Small.” Many of you know him to be our ELCA missionary in Liberia along with Rev. Linda Johnson-Seyenkulo. Brian wrote that along with teaching in Totota, he is also the interim director of St. Matthew’s Lutheran Church School in Red Light (outside of Monrovia). Sadly, the school caught fire recently and is a total loss. As you can imagine, the school is an important part of the ministry of St. Matthew’s and is vital for the community. The Global Ministry Team will be accepting donations to help rebuild the school. Please make your checks out to: Upper Susquehanna Synod and mail to PO Box 36, Lewisburg, PA 17837 by December 1 or give through our website or Tithe.ly app (choose Global partners and St Matt School). We will send the monies to the Lutheran Church of Liberia specifically for the rebuilding of the school. The plan is to offer this financial gift of support before the end of 2020. Thank you in advance for your support of this much needed mission.

For the full newsletter go to the synod website and click on Unity/Partners. Scroll down to Global Ministry Team and you will find all the newsletters from Pastor Brian and Pastor Linda.

And, ever wonder about our history with the Bavarian synod in Germany and how that partnership started? Read our latest Global Missions blog post here: https://www.uss-elca.org/brief-history-of-the-ansbach-wurzburg-partnership/

Up and Down the Valleys

The challenges and changes during these past several months have made it difficult, if not impossible, for us to get together. Meetings are held online, travel has been restricted, and even the synod office is open by appointment only. For four years, we have focused on the value of relationships and we don’t want to lose that focus. So, Bishop Collins will be taking up “residence” in particular church buildings across the synod a few days a month. This is to provide opportunities for members and leaders of our congregations in those areas to stop in to chat with the bishop. Precautions will be followed by meeting in a safe space, physically distancing, and wearing masks. All who wish to connect with the bishop in this way are asked to email her to set up an appointment (bpcollins@uss-elca.org). Next month she will be heading to the Juniata Valley and Tulpehocken Conferences. Here is the schedule for October:

- Thursday, October 15th – 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at St. Luke Lutheran, Williamsport
- Wednesday, October 21st – 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at United Lutheran, Lock Haven
- Tuesday, October 27th – 9:00 am to 3:00 pm at Beaver Lutheran, Beaver Springs
- Wednesday, October 28th – 9:00 am – 3:00 pm at Sharon Lutheran, Selinsgrove


Congratulations are in order for Lycoming County college-bound students who have received scholarships from the St. Paul Lutheran Church Scholarship Fund. They include Ethan Strother (St. Luke, Williamsport), Grace Schreckengast (St. Mark, Williamsport), Maxwell Ferguson and Olivia-Anne Eisner (both St. John, Jersey Shore), and Jennifer Jackson and Olivia Welter (both Messiah, South Williamsport).

A gathering was held at the home of Pastor Jim and June Bricker, honoring the ministries of Rev. Erin Bovendam and Rev. Chris Mathiason. Bill Cullingford (Rev. Ela Robertson’s spouse) played a Celtic lament for their departure and a march to send them on their way.
Meeting Guidelines
The synod office has put together some guidelines for meetings in these pandemic times, particular annual meetings of congregations. Click here to see the document: https://www.uss-elca.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Guidance-for-meetings.pdf

Quilts and Kits Found
Some good news from Beirut: Three 40-foot shipping containers filled with thousands of mission quilts and school, personal and baby care kits, which reported as destroyed in the August 4 explosions at the port of Beirut, Lebanon, have been found intact. The three containers were stored behind a concrete block building, protecting them from the blast. The quilts and kits will soon be distributed to Syrian and Palestinian refugees. For more information or to donate: https://lwr.org/beirut

Advocacy Book Study
The Synod Advocacy Team is sponsoring a virtual book study on Austin Channing Brown's memoir I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness. Participants will be able to choose from among three (3) time options, each option offering three (3) one-hour sessions. The options offered are: (A) Sundays, October 11, 18, and 25 from 2PM-3PM; (B) Sundays, October 11, 18, and 25 from 3PM-4PM; and (C) Wednesdays, October 14, 21, and 28 from 7PM-8PM. Pre-registration is encouraged but not required. Register here: https://tithe.ly/event-registration/#/2537957. The book study will focus on Channing Brown's personal, educational, and vocational experiences as a Black female. The book cover provides this description: "Growing up in majority-white schools, organizations, and churches, Austin writes, 'I had to learn what it means to love Blackness,' a journey that led to a lifetime spent navigating America's racial divide as a writer, a speaker, and an expert helping organizations practice genuine inclusion." Zoom links for each option are

- For Sundays at 2pm - https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86120961163?pwd=SzY4SytmQ0RWKytYSWhoUGl3bk40Zz09
- For Sundays at 3pm- https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81652068894?pwd=K1JsRHBTSoxDa0xBK1dRSFR4K2hlUT09
- For Wednesdays at 7pm - https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88259530277?pwd=MDI8Wlk2K1o2M005R2R4MkxleWw3QT09

Additional questions or concerns may be directed to prjohnyost@gmail.com or lisabarnes@ptd.net.

October 31- November 1: Youth Retreat: All Hallows Eve Celebration
The Episcopal Diocese of Central PA is sponsoring this event at Camp Mount Luther and invites youth from synod congregations to attend! Their goal for this event is to have fun while following social distancing guidelines. The Diocese of Central PA youth committee will follow all the COVID-19 response protocols of the Diocese for this youth ministry opportunity. That includes social distancing, masks, a limited number of youth in each cabin, all food will be provided by Camp Mt. Luther. Register here: http://www.cvent.com/events/all-hallows-eve-youth-celebration/event-summary-e3ddade2b3794502810a8a55aface0fa.aspx. For questions about this event, please contact Mary Ellen Kilp at cpayouthcom@gmail.com

November 1, 2020: Run4Camp
A new pandemic fundraiser for CML: Run4Camp 5K on All Saints Day: Camp Mount Luther invites you to be part of a fundraiser for camp that is being sponsored by Lutheran Outdoor Ministries. Sixteen Lutheran camps from across the country, including CML, are looking for folks to run/walk/rollerblade/bike/ski/wheelchair (whatever!) on Sunday, November 1, 2020. You will enter with a
$25 registration fee and then you can also get at least five sponsors for your 5K with all proceeds going to Camp Mount Luther. Every single nickel pledged/given in support of YOU will go directly to Camp Mount Luther. Then, during your 5K on November 1, you will send a selfie of yourself while you are out on the road, or the trail, or wherever. And there are plans to have a virtual finish line as well. Be part of this exciting new opportunity for LOM and Camp Mount Luther! To sign up: https://lomnetwork.wufoo.com/forms/mi2zyf11 iow6ol/

November 5, 2020: Deadline for Seafarer Bags
This is our 10th 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/). Fabric gift sacks, with instructions, are available at the Synod Office. PLEASE PAY ATTENTION TO THE DETAILED INSTRUCTIONS FOR EACH BAG! For a flyer with instructions and to promote this, click here: https://wp.me/a9Gqgm-1oC. Please make sure you follow the instructions exactly. Substitute items should not be included. YOU ALSO NEED TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TO PICK UP THE BAGS AND TO DROP OFF FILLED BAGS. CALL THE SYNOD OFFICE AT 570-524-9778. if you have your bags done please make an appointment to drop them off now! You can read about ministry that Seafarer's offers in their latest newsletter: https://d9efe642-f8bd-4cba-8f4d-5a503d12d57c.filesusr.com/ugd/0a725f_63e533f98c6f442f8f91ec9eaead53c8.pdf.

November 6, 2020: Evening at Shade Mountain to Benefit Mount Luther
This is a fundraising opportunity to share fellowship, entertainment, and enjoy locally produced wine, all to benefit Camp Mount Luther. For everyone’s safety, should COVID-19 infections in the area increase significantly, or CDC or PA officials restrict public gatherings, the event will be canceled. Face coverings and social distancing are expected while in the building. Guests will be seated only with those in their arrival party. The first seating will be from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. The second seating will be 6:30-7:30 p.m. There will be a limit of 25 people for each seating. The menu is to include a Club Sandwich with Tortellini Salad, Chips, Dessert, and a glass of wine. Make your reservations by calling 570-922-1587 or emailing cml@campmountluther.org. Cost is a donation to camp. Consider a donation that is equal or greater to the food and entertainment provided. If you choose to purchase any bottles of wine that evening, a portion of the proceeds will be given to Camp Mount Luther. If you cannot make it that night, you can visit Shade Mountain Winery from November 6 to November 13 and purchase wine and indicate it is for the Camp Mount Luther fundraiser. Promote it: https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-Shade-Mountain-Winery-Flyer.pdf

November 7, 2020: Virtual Racial Justice Training
We want to talk about race, racism, and racial justice as a church. We see the need and feel the deep divide in our country and even in some of our communities and congregations. But how do we start? How can we help our church community begin to have conversations about race that are scriptural, educational, helpful? What if we have few or no people of color in our congregation? How do we have healthy conversation around such a charged issue?

The Upper Susquehanna Synod is offering this training to rostered ministers, lay ministry professionals, and congregation members. The training will be led by the Lower Susquehanna Synod’s Toward Racial Justice team with training to foster healthy and holy conversation so that congregations have the tools and confidence to deepen discussions and take action. The workshop will address three important aspects of anti-racism work: 1) Talking about Race: Language, vocabulary, people skills, and best practices, 2) History and systemic racism in the United States, and 3) How to begin conversations and action in your congregation or ministry context.

The 4-hour training will be virtual via ZOOM and will run from 9:00-11AM and 12:30-2:30PM on Saturday November 7, 2020. Cost is $25.00 per person. If more than two members of a congregation register,
additional registrants are free. Registration closes 1 week prior to the workshop. Register here  For more information or for the free registrants, please contact Marty Shifflett at 717-652-1852 ext. 115 or mshifflett@lss-elca.org.

February 2021: GROW in the Snow
The synod GROW Team is working on details to possibly have the annual GROW in the Snow synod youth retreat at Camp Mount Luther. We will announce details as soon as we can!

October 28, 2021: Lutheran Day at the Capital
As we continue to move through the pandemic, we look forward and invite you to mark your calendar for next year’s Lutheran Day. We will gather in Harrisburg on Thursday, October 28, 2021. We have moved this annual event from the spring into the fall in prayerful anticipation that we may safely gather by then. Learn more here: https://www.lutheranadvocacypa.org/save-the-date-for-lutheran-day-2021-october-28/
Spending Time at Camp
By Heather LeBlanc

This summer, my three adult children came home to live because of COVID. Amidst the stress and fear and politics and pain that this pandemic has unleashed, I got the gift of four months with children that otherwise would not have returned to a family unit in my lifetime, at least not for four solid months. And then, we went to Camp Mount Luther.

Because of COVID, the cabins and grounds could not host the usual family camp. But with the opportunity to rent a cabin for a few days, our family enjoyed sunrises and sunsets. Warm breezes and long hikes. Splashing in the streams with our dog. And a strong recalibration of perspective.

Much of the busyness and nonstop pressures of life before COVID has been stripped of its value. Supper together, at the table, is returning to many households. Family game nights are again a possibility. Taking time to “stop and smell the roses” has for some lucky enough to live in central Pennsylvania (or other natural surroundings) turned into opportunities to pause and appreciate the endurance of God’s creation. It has been here all along. It will be here long after our toil ceases. But will you have enjoyed it?

I heartily recommend that you go to camp. Enjoy the peace, quiet, and rejuvenation.

Make Your Shade Reservation

In about a month, we will have our annual Evening at Shade Mountain Winery. This is a fundraising opportunity to share fellowship, entertainment, and enjoy locally produced wine, all to benefit Camp Mount Luther. For everyone’s safety, should COVID-19 infections in the area increase significantly, or CDC or PA officials restrict public gatherings, the event will be canceled. Face coverings and social distancing are expected while in the building. Guests will sit with those whom they arrive. The first seating will be from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. The second seating will be 6:30-7:30 p.m. There will be a limit of 25 people for each seating. The menu is to include a Club Sandwich with Tortellini Salad, Chips, Dessert, and a glass of wine.

Make your reservations by calling 570-922-1587 or email cml@campmountluther.org. Cost is a donation to camp. Consider a donation that is equal to or greater than the food and entertainment provided. If you choose to purchase any bottles of wine that evening, a portion of the proceeds will be given to Camp Mount Luther. If you cannot make it that night, you can visit Shade Mountain Winery from November 6 to November 13 and purchase wine and indicate it is for the Camp Mount Luther fundraiser. Here is a flyer: https://www.campmountluther.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/2020-Shade-Mountain-Winery-Flyer.pdf
Orientation Zooms are being held on October 4 and 5 so sign up today if you are planning to participate!

A new pandemic fundraiser for CML: Run4Camp 5K on All Saints Day: Camp Mount Luther invites you to be part of a fundraiser for camp that is being sponsored by Lutheran Outdoor Ministries. Sixteen Lutheran camps from across the country, including CML, are looking for folks to run/walk/rollerblade/bike/ski/wheelchair (whatever!) on Sunday, November 1, 2020.

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Camp is getting busier as we continue to deal with the global pandemic. It feels good to see some more normal activities going on this time of year, including a couple of wedding receptions.

In October, we will be hosting Fall Frisbee Fundays at camp. Each Sunday in October at 4:00 p.m. the director will be at the A-Center for anyone who would like to play a round of Frisbee Golf. No need to sign-up, just show up to play.

We had our annual golf tournament on September 21. It was a great day with sunny skies and 82 golfers taking part. We raised about $12,000 for the ministry of the camp.

Thrivent Financial has a program called Action Teams geared toward helping members engage in service projects. Think about a need in your community (for instance, at camp) and how you could help. If you are a Thrivent member, apply to lead a volunteer team in a fundraiser, service activity, or educational event that can be completed within 90 days. Once your project is approved, you’ll receive a Thrivent Action Kit, including a $250 Community Impact Card that you can use as seed money to purchase project supplies and create promotional materials. For more information on this program, visit https://www.thrivent.com/making-a-difference/living-generously/thrivent-action-teams/. If you’d like to do an action team for camp, contact chad@campmountluther.org.

And, if you are a Thrivent member, you can also designate your Thrivent Choice dollars to us. So far this year, the camp has received about $2,000 in Thrivent Choice dollars. This time last year, we had over $11,000. Don’t forget to direct your dollars!