

Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State / Lutheran Student Community

On the first Thursday of classes this fall, Brady (first-year student majoring in microbiology) came to worship and dinner with Lutheran Campus Ministry. He was looking for an inclusive community, where everyone is welcome. It was even better than he expected. "I've only been coming for a little bit, but it's a close-knit group of people you can rely on. It feels authentic. Everyone is open and comfortable sharing. It feels like a family setting, without hierarchy and you don't find that much around campus."

Student life is as complicated and challenging as any other chapter in life. Students face family concerns, academic demands, social and friendship challenges, and uncertainty about finances and their future. Within Lutheran Campus Ministry, students gather with others for worship, discussion, service, or meals together and there they encounter authentic community. Students are reminded that they are loved and embraced by God. In community, students discern the ways God will work through them in their careers and their whole lives to be part of bringing the Good News to the world around them.

YOUR presence on campus. We are at Penn State on behalf of the synod and the whole church. We walk with students through their years at the university, providing opportunities for them to encounter God and grow as people of faith, make connections with other Christians, and find opportunities to serve their neighbor. Lutheran Campus Ministry provides ongoing reminders of God's love and action in the world that touches individual students and the wider campus community as well.

Worshipping Community – Students gather weekly for worship on campus with Lutheran Campus Ministry at the interfaith Pasquerilla Spiritual Center. In the midst of their demanding and busy schedules, students set aside time for worship together, using the ancient rite of evening prayer. They sing, pray, share scripture and reflections; encountering God in the middle of the campus. On Sunday mornings, Deacon Alicia Anderson, Campus Minister, welcomes students at Grace Lutheran Church near campus, helping them know they are welcome and find connections within the multi-generational worshipping community.

Community of Students – Weekly group meals through LCM help students find authentic community within our campus ministry. As students spend time together over Thursday dinner, they talk about their week, sharing struggles as well as successes. Students also connect with each other and build friendships at volunteer events, through discussions, and in worship. They truly share the journey together, supporting and caring for each other in the highs and lows of university life and the years that follow. As students share challenges, laugh together, pray for each other, and learn, they embody the presence of God with and for one another.

Service and Learning – Students are eager to share their time and abilities to help others. Through service both on campus and off campus, they find the joy of helping while learning more about the complexities of need, generosity, and justice. They also learn about themselves while serving as God's hands in the local community and wider world.

Growing in Faith and Knowledge – Students seek safe places to ask questions about life and faith, as well as places where they can share their thoughts and develop new understandings.

Students explore questions and delve into the countless ways faith and daily life intersect through informal conversations, discussions, events, campus-wide speakers, and one-on-one conversations with our campus minister. They discern how God is calling them to serve the needs of the world through the work they are preparing for, as well as the activities, interests, and relationships in their lives.

Congregational Partnerships – Grace Lutheran Church continues as an important partner in ministry in State College. Students worship there on Sundays and are welcome to participate in the life of the congregation. Students are a vital part of vocal and instrumental music at Grace this year and help with anti-hunger food distributions in partnership with the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. Throughout the region, LCM is striving to build more and deeper connections with congregations. The wide network of congregations in central Pennsylvania and Maryland that provides financial support helps offset cuts in synodical and churchwide funding. We are deeply grateful for the generous support from congregations, alumni, and friends of the ministry.

Campus Partnerships – Lutheran Campus Ministry and Lutheran Student Community maintain important connections with a variety of groups on campus. Our office in Pasquerilla Spiritual Center provides regular opportunities to work with the Center for Spiritual and Ethical Development in supporting students who are seeking pastoral care, and to partner on events and projects, including Interfaith Literacy Chats and hosting Labyrinth reflections during Advent and Lent. Opportunities to volunteer at the Penn State Arboretum allow students to serve the community while enjoying the beauty of God’s creation. We continue to explore ways to deepen partnerships with the Gender Equity Center and the Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity within Penn State Student Affairs.

Ecumenical and interfaith partnerships are valuable in our campus setting. We participate in a Ramadan Iftar with the Muslim community at Pasquerilla Spiritual Center, and continue to connect with the Hillel Jewish community at Penn State through the challenges of violence in the Middle East, knowing there are no easy answers to the complicated issues there. On Ash Wednesday, Campus Minister Alicia Anderson offers *Ashes to Go* for students between classes on the plaza outside Palmer Art Museum alongside the United Methodist campus minister. This year’s Alternative Spring Break to North Carolina for hurricane relief is a partnership with the United Methodist Campus Ministry and hosted by Luther Rock Camp and LDR in North Carolina. Through the Penn State Powwow, we experience Native American spiritual practice and learn more about native communities.

Online Presence – Lutheran Campus Ministry engages and informs people online through weekly listserv messages, Instagram and Facebook posts, and our website. Reflection and prayer resources, updates on events and opportunities, and ways to request prayers or one-on-one conversation are available for students, alumni, parents and supporters. This is our sixth year offering a Lenten program through social media, alongside year-round weekly reflections, prayers, and other posts. Through social media, we inform, offer resources for spiritual growth, and tell the story of how Lutheran Campus Ministry impacts students.

Fundraising Efforts – As Lutheran Campus Ministry continues adapting to decreased synodical and churchwide support, congregational gifts and individual donations are vitally important. Through social media for *LCM IMPACT*, *Campus Ministry Madness*, and *Giving Tuesday* campaigns have helped increase our ministry’s visibility and provide opportunities to tell the story of Lutheran Campus Ministry. Your financial contributions, volunteer time, leadership skills, student referrals, regular prayers, and other forms of support help us continue to build our faith community and bring the good news of Jesus on campus.

We are grateful – We truly are grateful that the Upper Susquehanna Synod sees the vital need for Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State and our work on campus. Providing a community that is centered on the Gospel of Jesus where questions are welcome, diversity is celebrated, and God’s love is truly lived, is both life-giving and life-altering. Reaching out to young adults to support and foster their faith is incredibly important for the life of the church.

We invite your continued prayers for campus ministry and for students as they face the unique challenges of university life and growing into adulthood. Please pray especially for those who will graduate this year and those who will arrive on campus for their first year this fall.

Thank you for the important partnership we share in this ministry.

Peace,
Alicia Anderson, Campus Minister
Minister of Word and Service (ELCA Deacon)

Website: lutheranpennstate.org
Social Media on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#): @lutheranpennstate

Weekly listserv for students at Penn State: [Sign Up Here](#)
Listserv messages for Friends of Lutheran Campus Ministry: [Sign Up Here](#)

Visit the LuMin Network website to find information about campus ministry at other colleges and universities and connect students from your congregation: luminelca.org/ministries/.

Lutheran Campus Ministry at Penn State is the ELCA’s presence on the Penn State campus, supported through grants from the Allegheny Synod, Lower Susquehanna Synod, Upper Susquehanna Synod, ELCA Churchwide, as well as individuals and congregations who are committed to fostering spiritual growth of students on campus, laying the groundwork for their lives as followers of Jesus in college and after graduation.