

Wayfarer

STORIES FROM THE ROAD.



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**SOUTHWESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA
SYNOD**
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN
CHURCH IN AMERICA

MISSION:

TO SERVE, CONNECT,
AND EQUIP ELCA
CONGREGATIONS
IN SOUTHWESTERN
PENNSYLVANIA TO TELL
THE STORY OF JESUS



“Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.”

Proverbs 16:24

Cover Image: Monastery of Moraca
Beehive Miniature of Monastery

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HOW OUR HYMNS CAME TO BE



Bishop Kurt F. Kusserow

Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Bishop
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Can you imagine celebrating the season of Advent without singing *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*? Or Reformation Day without dusting off *Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Your Word*? What would Thanksgiving be without that familiar hymn of praise, *Now Thank We All Our God*? Even trying to imagine this leaves me feeling somehow bereaved!

The truth is we would not have any of these old favorites—and a great many others—without the tremendous gift that Catherine Winkworth and John Mason Neale have given to the Church. These familiar hymns were written hundreds of years ago, when our ancestors in the faith spoke German or Latin or Greek. The only way they have come to us to become part of our treasury of song is through the gift of translation.

Each year on July 1, our church commemorates these two 19th Century hymn translators together. It may not occur to us when we see their names included in the calendar of Lesser Festivals and Commemorations on page 16 of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* (or LBW, p. 11), how deeply their work has impacted our lives. It is when the words and music of a familiar hymn fill our minds and inspire our faith that we may come to recognize the significance of their gift.

Born in London in 1827, Catherine Winkworth

learned the German language while living with her aunt in Dresden for a year. She translated 491 hymns from the German chorale tradition into English, keeping close to the spirit of the original text while also providing a natural-sounding English version to use in worship. Her book of translations, *Lyra Germanica*, was immediately very well received.

Catherine was also an advocate for women's rights, and particularly for opportunities in higher education while serving as secretary of the Clifton Association for Higher Education for Women.¹

Knowing something of her life and passion, the second verse of *Dearest Jesus, at Your Word* can take on a depth of meaning that moves our hearts to gratitude and inspires us to bring this same light of the Spirit to others:

"All our knowledge, sense, and sight
lie in deepest darkness shrouded
till your Spirit breaks the night,

filling us with light unclouded.
All good thoughts and all good living
come but by your gracious giving."

John Mason Neale's work of translation is generally regarded not to be quite as felicitous as Catherine's,² but he brought 419 Greek and Latin hymns into English usage. Ordained in the Church of England in 1842, John was assigned a parish but was unable to serve there because of ill health and his apparent affinity for the Catholic Church. Instead, he served as warden for Sackville College, caring for indigent women and orphans. With Miss S. A. Gream, he founded the Sisterhood of St. Margaret, which became one of England's most famous training schools for nurses.³

We might bear in mind the orphans that John served every Palm Sunday when we sing,

"All glory, laud, and honor
to you, redeemer king,
to whom the lips of children
made sweet hosanas ring."

And, following his example, we may find ourselves moved to include people in the margins among our friends at Christmas to join us in singing,

"Good Christian friends rejoice
with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave;
Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all
to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save!
Christ was born to save!"

Eight years ago, I was asked to identify my favorite hymns (I can't quite remember now by whom) so that when I came to visit they could pick one to use that day. I took the assignment to heart and ended up creating a list of 19 hymns, ranked by preference, which I ended up saving in my "liturgy" file.

At the top of the list is *Lord, Thee I Love with all My Heart*. Written by Martin Schalling (1532-1608) and set to music by B. Schmid, it first appeared in the 1577 publication, *Orgeltabulaturbuch*. Each of the three verses sings the experience of my soul and the content of my faith, slowing intentionally at "Lord, Jesus Christ," the better to ponder and to praise the one who is our hope and our salvation. Without the gift of translation, I would be left, literally, without words.

In deep appreciation for the gift that Catherine Winkworth and John Mason Neale have given each of us, I encourage worship planners on June 30, the Sunday closest to their commemoration, to use hymns they have translated; perhaps *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, or Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation*. ♠

¹ Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Festivals and Commemorations*, Augsburg, 1980, p. 273

² hymnary.org/person/Neale_JM

³ Pfatteicher, p. 272

Wayfarer for Lay Leaders

Wayfarer features stories for our synod's leaders, including congregation council members, staff, youth leaders, and musicians. Share with your congregation's lay leaders that they can sign up for a free subscription to *Wayfarer* at: swpasynod.org/wayfarer





Christina Neumann, Photo Courtesy of Apoidea

THE BUZZ ON CREATION CARE



Pastor Richard Neumann

Retired Pastor

Christina Joy Neumann, owner of Apoidea—an urban apiary with 75-100 hives located within six miles of downtown Pittsburgh—educates children about important lessons humans can learn from the honey bee. (She also happens to be my daughter.) Honey bee diversification of labor and the democratic decision-making cooperation between diverse bee groups (i.e. bee justice) enable the hive to successfully survive. It is called *biomimicry* when we value nature for the problem-solving strategies humans can learn from it and thus find hope.

The ELCA social statement, *Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice* states, “...as people of Biblical faith,...our primary motivation is the call to be God’s caregivers and to do justice.” Apoidea is one of the few apiaries in Pennsylvania designated as Certified Naturally Grown. This signifies natural beekeeping practices; no antibiotics nor synthetic pesticides used on the bees, humane bee care, and provision for healthy native plants in the landscape. All honey is packed only in glass, preventing microplastics from entering the honey and the humans enjoying it. In short, justice for the creatures through responsible beekeeping and justice for humans eating honey that is free from harmful chemicals.

The same social statement reminds us that “Christian concern for the environment is shaped..by the Breath of God daily renewing the face of the earth!” Yet almost 40% of the land on earth is now desertified or barren due to human activities such as synthetic fertilizer

and pesticide use, ancient forest burning, and clearing for animal grazing, etc. To address such environmental problems, Christina is developing an educational nonprofit called CoNectar to educate the public about regenerative agriculture practices that emphasize the role of all pollinators, including native bees, in the restoration of a sustainable natural environment.

Honey can spark an interest in congregation creation care by noting the number of times honey is mentioned in Scripture—61 times! Congregations can then do creation care by learning about and advocating for those best practices that help pollinators survive and thrive. Inviting a natural bee keeper to address adult study groups, Bible school classes, youth ministry groups, etc, or having similar groups participate in a native bee study in their local area can be inspirational ways congregants can demonstrate care for the role of these small but essential sustainers of creation. 💧



CARE AFTER CLOSURE



Pastor Ellen Lundie

Associate Pastor of Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church, Glenshaw
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The process of welcoming members from a closed congregation into a new congregation becomes a testament to the resilience of faith and the power of communal support. Amidst the change, there lies an opportunity for growth and renewal. As congregations open their doors to those whose congregation has closed, they extend more than just hospitality; they offer compassion, empathy, and unity.

From the emotional landscape of closure to the practicalities of integration, the closing and welcoming congregations can experience the transformative power of collective support and the profound impact of shared faith. As a closing congregation embraces a new congregation and the welcoming congregation embraces new members, they not only honor the legacy of the past but also embody the hope of a future where the bonds of community transcend the boundaries of place.

At Bethlehem, Glenshaw, we had the opportunity to welcome members from First English, Sharpsburg, following the closure of First English in 2021. Over the past three years, we've learned a few things that may help congregations welcome members of a closed congregation.

HONORING EMOTIONS

The closure of a congregation can evoke many emotions, ranging from profound sadness to anger, confusion, resignation,

and perhaps relief or peace. For many of us, a congregation is our place of worship, a cornerstone of community, a source of spiritual guidance, and a sanctuary where we find solace and support during life's challenges.

The closure of a congregation can swiftly give way to grief as the members of the closing congregation mourn the loss of familiar services and events, cherished traditions, and the close-knit relationships cultivated within the congregation. Amidst the tumult of emotions, there may also be moments of introspection and reevaluation as individuals contemplate what the closure means for their faith journey and where they will find spiritual fulfillment in the future. Despite the pain of closure, there may be hope for new beginnings and the possibility of forging new connections in a new congregation. Leaders who are welcoming new members from a closing congregation need to acknowledge that the closure of a congregation is something that reverberates

through the lives of those affected long after the doors have shut for the final time. Even as they find new joys and ways to get involved in the welcoming congregation, there may be moments that stir up memories or longing for what used to be. Leaders and the welcoming congregation walk with them in times of sadness and enthusiasm.

YOU CAN TAKE A FEW THINGS WITH YOU

As humans, we attach memories to places and things. While the building of a closing congregation will no longer be accessible, there may be a few items that have significance for the members of the congregation that can come with them. A welcoming congregation may not need an entire supply of hymnals or every single piece of communion ware, but there are surely a few items that can find a new home. For the closing congregation, it may be difficult to think of which items they'd like to offer to the welcoming congregation. Pick one or two important things that can be a blessing to your new congregation.

THE MORE THE MERRIER

At the closing of a congregation, some may opt to explore different congregations individually, while others may find solace and strength in making this transition alongside fellow congregants. This collective decision-making process entails careful consideration of various factors, from proximity to home and the appeal of service styles to the availability of faith formation programs and the presence of friends or family members.

When a group chooses to join a new congregation together, they bring with them the invaluable support and camaraderie of their friends in faith. This collective transition requires diligence and intentionality, yet, the benefits are immense. Having familiar faces in the pews during worship, in Sunday school classes, and at fellowship events fosters a sense of continuity and belonging in the midst of change.

Indeed, stepping into a new environment can be daunting, but knowing that one is surrounded by friends who share their

faith journey can provide a comforting sense of support and solidarity. Whether navigating unfamiliar places or forging new connections within the congregation, having companions on this journey can make the transition smoother and more enriching. The journey to a new congregation becomes not just a search for a place of worship, but a reaffirmation of community and shared faith.

BE READY TO WELCOME

The welcoming congregation should prepare for the members joining from the closed congregation. This may be individuals, a committee, or any group that will provide intentional welcome. Welcoming new members from a closed congregation into an existing church community is an opportunity for compassion, empathy, and unity. To ensure a smooth transition and foster a sense of belonging, members of the congregation can extend a warm embrace and provide support.

Welcoming members reach out to newcomers, introduce themselves, and express genuine interest in getting to know them. Allow new members to share their experiences from their previous congregation and their hopes in joining a new congregation. Listen to their stories and understand the many emotions that may be present in this change. Practical support is also invaluable. Whether it's assisting with practical matters like finding their way around the church building or connecting them with relevant ministries, existing members can demonstrate hospitality in tangible ways.

Embracing newcomers with open hearts and minds, celebrating their unique gifts and contributions, and integrating them into the fabric of the church community, existing members can create a nurturing environment where all feel valued, respected, and empowered to grow together in their faith journey. As the community grows, you never know the surprises the Holy Spirit may have in store! 💧



Pastor Bob Hawk, Arleen Hawk, & Barbara Grance

GREETINGS TO RETIRED SERVANTS



Pastor Peter D. Asplin

Assistant to the Bishop

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In the middle of the last decade, Bishop Kurt Kusserow reached out to a group of retired pastors of the synod to discuss how best to provide care and connection for retired pastors and deacons as well as the widows and widowers of retired pastors and deacons.

Among the faithful servants in the organizing group were Pastor Larry and Susan Camberg, Pastor Horst and Janet Bandle, and Pastor Gordon Ray; all three of those pastors have since passed to the church triumphant. Also among the early leaders were Pastor Bob and Arleen Hawk and Pastor Dick and Barbara Grance. More recent additions to leadership are Pastor Ed and Nancy Sheehan.

The group quickly determined that a fellowship luncheon should be held every year. This annual tradition (except, of course, for COVID-time) is greatly enjoyed by ministers and spouses who gather. Many of them, having been friends for years, are delighted for the opportunity.

But in an effort to keep in touch with people between the annual luncheons, the group quickly developed a greeting card ministry. The goal of the ministry is to "remember everybody" and to let them know they are cared for. In particular, ordained persons are sent a card to remember their ordination anniversary, and everyone who has been married gets a card for their marital

anniversary. Birthday cards go out as well.

Ministers who receive ordination anniversary cards are always amazed that the group tries to get them their card on the actual day of the anniversary! Barbara Grance notes that some of these pastors and deacons will respond both saying, "I'm not that old!" and, "It really mattered, all those years of ministry."

A particular, and particularly faith-filled part of the greeting card ministry is sending cards in remembrance for the death of a spouse. Every year that a widow or widower is alive, the group sends them a card to remember their beloved spouse. The men and women who have received this care often respond about how meaningful it is that someone remembers that it's still hard, even two and five and fifteen years later, and that when they receive this card they receive God's love from their fellow ministry leaders.

Greeting cards have become a simple, effective, and meaningful ministry for our retired servants. 💧



DISTRIBUTIVE LEARNING



Pastor Stephen Slepecki

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Five years ago, when I felt the Holy Spirit guiding me towards my second career in ministry, I wasn't sure how I was going to fit seminary into my life. Fortunately, our ELCA seminaries have working students like me covered!

As a May 2023 graduate of United Lutheran Seminary now in my first call, I was asked by the synod to pen a short testimonial of my experiences with "distributive learning." As a distributive learning student, the majority of my classes were taken from home, online. Some of my classes were fully asynchronous—the lectures were pre-recorded and available for viewing on demand. In-class discussion took the form of either text-based discussion boards, or video essays and responses to classmates' videos. Other classes were synchronous, and had live classroom time that was conducted on Zoom.

Further, the seminary required that 24 of my 72 credits had to be taken as in-person "intensive" courses. These were entire courses that were offered in a single week on campus. These courses were often great fun and offered my classmates and me a chance to meet face-to-face, and to socialize after class, building bonds that have continued into our first calls.

There are, of course, pros and cons to nearly everything in life. One possible critique of the distributive learning track could be the loss of intangible experiences in seminary, such as frequent supply preaching, socialization with mentors such that we can share ministry stories and learn from their experiences, etc. This is undoubtedly a possible pitfall; but as with many things, we get from it what we put into it. The opportunities to build bonds with our peers and mentors are there, if we choose to take advantage of them.

What is undeniably true about distributive learning, is the fact that it offers older, second-career ministerial candidates such as myself, an opportunity to go to seminary that we would not have had otherwise. I could never have afforded to completely stop working while in seminary. The fact that I was able to earn my M.Div. mostly from home while continuing to work made it possible for me to pursue my second career, and I'm immensely grateful that United Lutheran Seminary offers such a program, as it made my ministry possible! 💧



BETTER TOGETHER: REFUGEE MINISTRY



Janet Montelaro

Member of Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wexford
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In 2018, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Wexford, dismayed by the separations of refugee families at the southwest border, committed to sponsor education efforts on the refugee crisis in the United States. Now joined by Perry Highway Lutheran Church and St. John's Lutheran Church of Highland, this collaborative effort is called the North Hills Refugee Ministry. (NHRM)

We first co-sponsored a public Zoom forum with our neighboring congregations, St. Brendan's Episcopal Church, Franklin Park, and the Unitarian Universalist Church of the North Hills. Our guest speaker from Global Refuge (formerly LIRS) energized the attendees by presenting a global view of the movement of peoples due to famine, natural disasters, and conflict.

Then we began recruiting congregation members willing to undergo training with Jewish Family and Community Services of Pittsburgh (JFCS), one of the oldest resettlement agencies in the U.S. After obtaining the necessary clearances, 20 individuals went to work helping to transition an African family who had been living in a refugee camp for over ten years. **When Trinity spread the word throughout our congregation to donate needed household items, the first donation, surprisingly, came from St. John's of Highland!**

The following summer St. John's hosted a refugee forum with a guest speaker from

Global Refuge, attended by over 50 people. The discussion was vibrant and it was immediately evident that there was a strong interest in the plight of refugees coming to the U.S. It was heartening to see so many pastors in attendance.

After initial conversations with Perry Highway's council president and a point person at St. John's, we organized an informational meet and greet for the three congregations. Point persons in each congregation coordinated online training with JFCS. In March, our collective met for a dinner hosted by Trinity to strengthen our ties and celebrate our recent funding from the synod's Ethel L. Verney grant. We hope to begin our joint sponsorship of a refugee family soon.

Collaborative ministry among several congregations has the potential to bring people of faith together and to widen our horizons, both spiritually and experientially. We are definitely better together when we share our time, faith, and energy in a common mission. 💧



FEED MY SHEEP



Patty Newton

Member of Forks-Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Leechburg
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The Feed My Sheep Pantry opened in 2016 at Forks-Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Leechburg, and strives to help people in need by spreading the word of God through Christian inspired support of individuals. It is open once a month and on an emergency basis.

An overwhelmed, crying mother reached out for help when her shelves were empty of food, and she was expecting another child. Within one year, this mother was able to work toward her goals of providing nutritious foods and personal hygiene products, and returning to work. Our goal was to help families affected by shifts in family life roles over the last three years. A retired grandfather was suddenly giving his assistance to four grandchildren, ages seven to 14 years old, and his son. He was looking for more affordable groceries. Along with his local community food bank, he discovered our food pantry for staple supplies needed to help his family.

Our partnering organizations include 412 Food Rescue, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Sprankles IGA supermarket in Leechburg, Mission on the Move United Methodist ministry, and an anonymous donor from our church.

With grants from the synod's Ethel L Verney Fund and the Mission Endowment Fund, we can support clients with a bag

of food containing three meals, along with a fruit, a vegetable, cereal, juice, and one baking item. We also have supplied gift certificates for food and gas, eggs, frozen dinners, butter, cheese, meat such as hot dogs or kielbasa, and any donations we receive. When families become financially stable, they have been inspired to contribute food back to help others.

Prayers are also a big part of our ministry and we ask for prayer requests each month. We encounter clients who are overwhelmed with concerns about money, health issues, and having enough food for the week without taking away essentials.

For example, a young man only 17 years old was paralyzed in a motorcycle accident. His mother explained that he was in need of a ramp for his wheelchair to enter her home. The changes in the young man's life were very overwhelming and he needed to know there was support for him. We partnered with Habitat for Humanity to build the ramp and help support him and his family. 💧



THE TOMCAT WAY



Dr. Susan Traverso
President of Thiel College

At Thiel College, cultivation of the leaders that the world needs now forms the cornerstone of our educational philosophy. The “Tomcat Way,” is introduced during a student’s first year as an exploration and builds each subsequent year as students envision their future, belong, lead, and prepare to launch into their next phase.

Leadership, a critical skill for the 21st century, requires more than traditional academic knowledge. It demands a strong moral compass and a commitment to community service—values embedded in the ethos of Thiel College. Here, we prepare students to lead with integrity through a blend of rigorous academic programs and a vibrant campus life that encourages active community engagement.

Our alumni exemplify the impact of our approach. Long-serving Lutheran pastors Caroline Mendis '70 and Judy McKee '70, reflect the influence of their Thiel education in their professional and spiritual lives. Mendis was recently recognized as the longest-serving female pastor in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod. Among the current generation of graduates, several are making their marks. Mak Sanders '21 is at the Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary after being awarded the prestigious Fund for Leaders full-tuition scholarship from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Audra Franley '17 has returned to Thiel as a Visiting Professor

of Religion and Coordinator for Campus Ministries. Graduates Jamie Ulrich '18 and Liz Koerner '16 have also embraced calls to become Lutheran pastors.

Our innovative academic programs are designed to bridge classical knowledge with practical application. Our graduate programs in Business Administration, Physician Assistant Studies or Speech-Language Pathology are structured to address workforce needs and prepare students for leadership roles in these critical sectors.

Moreover, Thiel College is committed to the holistic development of its students. Our curriculum and co-curricular activities are infused with opportunities for students to engage in service learning and community projects, which are vital components of the Tomcat Way. These experiences allow students to practice their leadership skills in tangible settings, fostering a sense of responsibility and a drive to contribute positively to society. 💧



PENTECOST STOLES & THEIR STORIES



Lauren Wolcott

Synod Communications Director

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Dressing for the occasion of religious work goes back as far as story itself; humans seem to be hardwired for the sensibility that special moments require preparation in how you present yourself. There are likely times when another element of our human condition aids us in this mental preparation: the special meaning we place on beloved objects. It starts when we are very young and attach to comfort items, and it is a lifelong propensity. Psychologists believe that meaningful objects can actually boost our confidence about our own abilities! It's no wonder that so many of the stoles worn by our ministers come with special stories about where they came from, who they came from, and what they mean today. When our ministers prepare to lead worship, they are not only dressed for the part, but they are carrying with them the people and memories and values that help them to execute their calls with confidence. We asked our ministers to tell us about their Pentecost stoles and the stories that come along with them.



My stole was made for me for my ordination by a member at Christ Lutheran, Duquesne. I saw a design with a dove and fish that I shared with her and she created this. I treasure it because I know the work that went in to finding the perfect fabric and creating the design.

Pastor Sue Devine

Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries (PLUM)

This set of macramé stoles was made for me by my spouse, Solveig Paulson Rafanan, at Christ Seminary Seminex. We were married on my internship in a Sunday service at Christ Lutheran Church in DC. I was the first of 39 vicars/interns to be married to a daughter of the congregation so it was a great celebration. During my final year at the seminary, Solveig made these stoles for me. I was a 1978 graduate and just last week, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of Seminex by traveling to the Lutheran School of Theology for a reunion and conference.

Rev. Dr. Martin Rafanan
Retired





When I was ordained (June 13, 1981) a red stole, borrowed from Pastor Jerome Alexis, was placed on my shoulders. My mom was concerned that I had to have something of my own going forward, so she set about to make a stole for me. She found a symbol that she liked in a magazine (maybe “The Lutheran?”). It had the Pentecost flame and a baptismal shell with drops of water. She proceeded to copy and re-draw it on some pieces of colored felt. Looking for a suitable bright red material, she ended up with some wide-wale corduroy—so 80s! She carefully stitched on the symbols, and figured that her hand-crafted gift would serve until I got “something better.” Well, it ended up being the only red stole that I have had—for 43 years now—and has served well. It is still a treasure!

Pastor Paul Poerschke
Retired

My red stole is the first one I ever owned, bought the summer before my internship when I was on a trip to the Holy Land with Peace Not Walls, the ELCA’s former strategy for our work in the Holy Land. It came from Dar al Kalima, a college and trade school associated with Christmas Lutheran Church in Bethlehem. On each side is the Jerusalem Cross and a dove, which for me reminds me to speak of peace and justice to all four corners of the world. Red stole occasions are always so joyful, and rooting that joy in the hope of peace for all is an important grounding for my ministry.

Pastor Erin Jones
Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania



This Pentecost stole belonged to a friend, Pastor Paul Sampsell, who died in November of 2001, seven months before I was ordained. It was the stole which was used for my ordination. It was given to me by his widow, Jane Sampsell, also a good friend of mine. I remember sitting at synod assembly on June 15, 2002, the day I was ordained, thinking about Paul and touching the stole I was wearing for the first time. My pastor and sponsor, Pastor Janet Grill, was sitting beside me and noticed me fingering the stole. She said to me: “He knows.” She understood I was thinking about Paul. I think about both him and Jane every time I put on this stole.

Pastor Kim Rapczak
Spiritual Care Coordinator, AHN

Colleague Connections

These listings are complete to the best of the knowledge of the synod staff. If you feel there has been an omission, please contact Sandy DeLorenze at sandy.delorenze@swpasynod.org or 412-367-8222.

Ordination Anniversaries:

May-July 2024

- 5 Years: Pastor Eric Damon
Pastor Sherry Hazuda
- 10 Years: Pastor David Hanssen
Pastor Ryan Kobert
Pastor Katherine Maul
- 20 Years: Pastor Janice Altenburger
- 25 Years: Marsha Adams
Pastor Ronald Brown
Deacon Elizabeth Caywood
- 30 Years: Pastor Susan Irons
- 35 Years: Pastor Scott Bryte
Pastor Roger Steiner
- 45 Years: Pastor Scott Olbert
Pastor Clifton Suehr
- 50 Years: Pastor James Dollhopf
Pastor Donald Green
Pastor Caroline Mendis
Pastor Curtis Thompson
- 55 Years: Pastor Allen Scanlon
- 60 Years: Pastor James Dorow
Pastor Richard Grance
Pastor Robert Schlotter
- 65 Years: Pastor Robert Smith

Ordination:

Pastor Elizabeth Rheinfrank,
February 24

New Calls:

Pastor Patricia Schneck,
Christ, Pittsburgh
(Millvale)

Welcome:

Pastor Karen Taylor,
Virginia Synod

Congratulations:

Pat Zerega received the 2024 Legacy Award from Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility

Pastor Scott Dennis received a Ph.D. from the University of Glasgow, Scotland

Pastor Bob Schaefer received a committee award in the 47th Christian Art Show at Calvary Lutheran Church, Murrysville

Births:

Everett Owen Chapman,
grandchild of Pastor Peggy Suhr-Barkley and Dennis Barkley,
born on April 12

Retirement:

Pastor David Littke, April 1
Pastor Melba Dibble, May 1

In Memoriam:

Pastor Robert Brunk,
January 24, 2024

Deacon Jean Sontag,
January 27, 2024

John Eaton,
brother of Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton,
February 1, 2024

Mary Hricko,
grandmother of Pastor Jennifer Soltis,
February 18, 2024

Joyce Johnston,
mother of Pastor Jocelyn Johnston,
March 2, 2024

Dorothy Ervin,
widow of Pastor William Ervin, Jr.,
March 21, 2024

James Arter II,
father of Pastor Jim Arter,
April 3, 2024

Joyce Compton,
wife of Kelly Spaninger,
April 6, 2024

Marilyn Bohman,
mother of Loran Bohman,
April 15, 2024

Prayer Requests:

Pastor Peggy Suhr-Barkley, Pastor Don Green, Kathy Green, Dave Markowich, Joe Gruesu, Wilma Cairns
[View the most up-to-date list at: swpasynod.org/prayer](https://swpasynod.org/prayer)

SYNOD STAFF PRESENCE | FEB-APR '24

Whether in the joy of celebrating milestones, the uncertainty of pastoral transitions, or the trauma of congregational crises, the synod supports members during the biggest changes and needs. **Bishop Kusserow and assistants, Pastors Asplin and Stoller, have been present with the following congregations during in-person and online visits to ministers, lay leaders, and councils:**

Ascension, McKees Rocks
Berkeley Hills, North Hills
Bethany, Bethel Park
Bethel, Ford City (CCLP)
Bethlehem, Scenery Hill
Calvary, Arnold
Camp Lutherlyn
Christ, Charleroi
Christ, Duquesne
Christ, Millvale
Christ, West Newton
Evangelical, Worthington
Faith, Laurel Gardens
Faith, Natrona Heights
Faith, Upper St. Clair
First English, Butler
First, Downtown

Good Shepherd, Monroeville
Holy Angels, Wilmerding
Holy Trinity, Beechview
Holy Trinity, Irwin
Hope Memorial, Smithton
Hope, Brighton Township
Hope, Cranberry
House of Prayer, Aliquippa
Jacob's, Masontown
Mt. Lebanon United
Nativity, Allison Park
North Zion, Baldwin Boro
Our Redeemer, McMurray
Passavant Community
Perry Highway, Wexford
PLUM Cooperative
Redeemer, Monaca

Salem, Delmont
St. Andrew, Moon Twp.
St. John of Highland
St. John, North Versailles
St. Paul, Carmichaels
St. Paul, Monessen
St. Paul, Zelienople
St. Peter, Evans City
Stewart Avenue, Pittsburgh
Trinity, Butler
Trinity, Ellwood City
Trinity, Freeport
Trinity, Latrobe
Trinity, Verona
Zelienople-Harmony Shared
Ministry
Zion, Harmony

May



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Calendar of Causes

SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIAL MINISTRY PARTNERS

June



SEMINARIAN DEVELOPMENT & SUPPORT FUND

Contact Rev. Peter Asplin as liaison to the synod Committee on Ministry at peter.asplin@swpasynod.org.

July



Thiel College is an independent liberal arts college rooted in the Lutheran tradition. Offering distinctive programs, Thiel provides an accessible and inclusive learning environment that emphasizes service to society.



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STORIES FROM THE ROAD



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Devotional: ARE WE THERE YET?



Deacon Beth Caywood

Resource Ministry Director

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“Are we there yet?” If you have ever been on a long car trip, you have probably heard these words voiced from a young one in the backseat. The anticipation of reaching the awaited destination cannot be contained!

As adults, we, too, approach the length of time in any given day in terms of quantity. Have you ever found yourself saying, “I need more time,” “There’s never enough time,” or “Where did the time go?” In our efforts to have productive, fulfilling lives we find ourselves rushing from one thing to the next, and yet often feeling we have not completed everything we want or need to do.

The author of Ephesians (5:15-17, 20) challenges us in the use of our time. Rather than stumble or drift through life, we are called to be wise in how we make the most of our time. How might we begin to understand that wisdom, what the will of God is, and how we could use our time wisely? In Baptism, we are reminded who(se) we are as children of God. We remember the “gift of the Holy Spirit: the spirit of wisdom and understanding...” (ELW p.231)

Author Erica Layne writes, “Begin and finish your days with thoughts of gratitude. Those first and final moments set the tone for the many minutes that fall in between.” Maybe we’re not there yet and giving thanks at all times takes effort some days, but what a great place to begin! 💧