

Issue No. 12 | November 2022

# Wayfarer

STORIES FROM THE ROAD.



*In this issue...*

THE LANGUAGE  
OF ADVENT

p. 5

THANKSGIVING  
IN DORMONT

p. 7

HONORING  
THE SAINTS

p. 8



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

Published by Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod

## MISSION:

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

“I will give you the  
treasures of darkness and  
riches hidden in secret  
places, so that you may  
know that it is I, the Lord,  
the God of Israel, who call  
you by your name.”

*Isaiah 45:3*

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# INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 02 *The Ministry of Adjudication*
- 04 *The Process of Progress*
- 05 *The Language of Advent*
- 07 *Thanksgiving in Dormont*
- 08 *Honoring the Saints*
- 09 *Storytelling as Vocation*
- 11 *Lutheran Services in America*
- 12 *Grant Spotlight: Christ Millvale*
- 13 *Christ's Love through Cookies*
- 15 *Colleague Connections*
- 16 *Calendar of Causes*

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# THE MINISTRY OF ADJUDICATION



## Bishop Kurt F. Kusserow

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I still remember how exhausting and disorienting the ELCA's new bishops formation was. Mountains of information overwhelmed our class of newbies like an all-you-can-eat buffet gone wrong! The weight of the office crashed down on us like that cartoon meme of an anvil suddenly falling out of the sky. And the worst part was *Legal 101*; learning how to adjudicate allegations of misconduct.

I have come to learn that adjudication is a vital part of a synod's ministry within the Church and that it takes many forms. The ministry of adjudication routinely provides real blessing for many people. It is also a deep heartache for some. In an introduction that I trust will be much less distressing than *Legal 101*, let me describe how adjudication is a ministry of support.

The word "judicatory," in its churchy context, means "governing body." Strictly speaking, the adjudication that a synod (or "middle judicatory") provides is a ministry of governance. When we think of what we expect from government, we can quickly identify much of what synod adjudication covers, such as:

- keeping records on file,
- having the proper forms to use for this or that matter,
- sorting out who has the authority in given situations, and
- resolving disputes.

Yes, the synod can tell you how many pastors have served your congregation over the years, and what their names are, and the dates of their service. Record-keeping is a part of the synod's ministry of adjudication. And, yes, you can get a fill-in-the-blanks contract for interim pastoral ministry from the synod office. Governance is that background ministry of administrative support that we all generally take for granted. You know it is being done well when nobody notices! This kind of adjudication blesses many people, even if for the most part they are unaware of the work that is done on their behalf.

Resolving disputes, however, is a more volatile kind of adjudication that can leave people feeling hurt and wronged, especially when the matter in dispute is an allegation of misconduct. In this kind of situation, adjudication is the difficult work of applying our governing documents to specific life situations in which people have caused or experienced harm. While it seems obvious to say that the harm caused by misconduct

has largely already been done before the work of adjudication begins, it is also true that the experience of being hurt can occur again or can happen in new and unexpected ways through the very effort to resolve the matter. And yet this form of adjudication also provides support, for in bearing this pain, trust may be sustained.

Bringing an allegation of misconduct forward can be a very difficult thing to do. Feelings of shame and humiliation can prevent people from bringing an allegation of misconduct forward for years, even decades. So when an allegation is first brought forward, the face of adjudication is pastoral care: listening, providing respect, pledging confidentiality. Providing pastoral care is a constitutional mandate for synods and for synod bishops. I have often heard it described as a profound blessing by the one who has been courageous enough finally to speak out.

Consultation follows the initial work of pastoral care. Synod bishops are required by the constitution to seek to resolve allegations of misconduct through consultation before disciplinary charges are made. This work of investigation documents the allegations, determines how they relate to specific behaviors for which a rostered minister is subject to discipline, and seeks to gain accounts from others who may be able to corroborate the allegations or who may themselves have experienced the alleged misconduct. This searching-out process affects each person invited into it.

Information-seeking interviews can cause distress among those who have some knowledge of the alleged behavior and have wrestled, often for years, whether or not to say anything about what they have seen or heard. Consultation panel members carry the pain of others as they do their work. Those who first voiced the allegation can feel they are now under investigation when their story is cross-examined. But for the work of adjudication to serve the church, this work must be done, and it must be done thoroughly. Quite often, small observations raised in the consultation process serve as doorways to previously

unknown but relevant information that can help authenticate or discredit allegations under investigation.

When the investigation is complete, the allegations are brought to the one against whom they have been made. This moment is almost always one of deep pain. Like the ripples set in motion when a stone is tossed into a pond, dismay, disbelief, disappointment, and distrust spread outward from this meeting and affect nearly every person in the relational system.

In this difficult place, the ministry of adjudication takes the form of clarifying agency. I have come to use the word “agency” as shorthand for the complex web of actions each person in the process can take and what consequences flow from those actions. An agent is one who acts; agency is the ability or authority to act. And at this point in the process, the one against whom the allegations have been brought has primary agency – to confirm the allegations or to deny them, to resign the call or to fight the accusations as false.

Each response moves the ministry of adjudication forward in a different way. An immediate resignation ends the adjudication process but requires intense pastoral care for the ministry site shocked by the news. Fighting false accusations brings the truth to light but leaves scars for those exonerated. The goal of every way forward is to serve the church by revealing the truth, even if it is painful to do so.

Finally, the matter is disclosed. Disclosure shares what can be documented with those who are most closely affected. Here again, pain and blessing arrive together, as people hear what can be shared and find their own lives affected by it. In every phase, the ministry of adjudication strives to support the church, calling us to bear the pain of harm together for the sake of the ministry we share. 💧





## THE PROCESS OF PROGRESS



**Barb Nugent**

Synod Vice President

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**D**o you ever feel that you can't make a difference? I'm so glad that Pastor James West didn't feel that way when he wrote the resolution on land acknowledgement, now known as "Land Back." Pastor West shares his story:

*"I was struck by the idea during our synod assembly in 2021, that while a land acknowledgement is an honorable thing to say, it really doesn't do anything for those people who were displaced by forces way beyond anyone's imagining. What could be done to make a difference? That question wouldn't go away. When conference four met a month before this year's synod assembly, I voiced these sentiments out loud. Instead of selling our properties to the highest bidder, what if we talked with representatives of indigenous populations about giving the land and the buildings back to them.*

*My prayer is that the conversations and relationships that develop from this resolution will bring new life, direction, and purpose among all of us. Perhaps congregations and organizations that are contemplating holy closure will find a new door, one that leads to something even greater that none of us could have imagined possible. Perhaps the closing doors will remain open as Christ's church '...in ev'ry age beset by change but Spirit led, must*

*claim and test its heritage and keep on rising from the dead.' (ELW Hymn 729, Text: Fred Pratt Green, 1903-2000)*

*It was a delight to hear from Pastor Asplin, watching the Churchwide Assembly by livestream, that these ideas from our synod were now part of a resolution passed by an overwhelming percentage of the voting members."*

Each year, you too have an opportunity to present a memorial or resolution related to an issue necessary to the life and ministry of this church for consideration during our annual synod assembly. Your conference dean can walk you through the procedures as to how your idea can make it to the floor as a memorial at assembly. The ELCA Churchwide Assembly gathers every three years to consider such actions. If you aren't sure who your dean is, or have questions about the process, please contact me. One person CAN make a difference; YOU can make a difference. 💧



# THE LANGUAGE OF ADVENT



## Pastor Kerri Clark

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I love the season of Advent - the sanctuary decked in vibrant blues; moody, contemplative hymns; the anticipation that builds as the weeks move toward Christmas. During this season, many of our hymns and appointed Scripture readings utilize the imagery of light and darkness. This imagery carries layers of meaning - day and night, illumination and shadow, understanding and ignorance, happiness and sadness, good and evil. To our modern ears, the language of light and darkness also conveys tone and color, and specifically race and skin color. As the Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney wrote, "However neutral those words were in the scriptures, [in] our world they have been mapped onto human flesh with evil intent."

As a culture, we are becoming more attentive to language that intentionally or unintentionally causes harm or further isolates marginalized groups. Many of us have moved to use more expansive language for humanity and, in the church, for God. We are being made aware of language that is racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, and ableist, and are choosing, to varying degrees, to do the work of using different words.

We are a culture steeped in white supremacy, and, as individuals, the intersections of our identities and life experiences give us varying layers of privilege. In this cultural landscape, white people have centered ourselves and our own experiences, often not noticing the struggles of others until they affect us.

As the church, though, we are called by God to be different. We are called to notice, and

attend to, people at the margins. We are called to love our neighbor, which we cannot do apart from listening to what our neighbors actually need.

Our neighbors who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color have said that it is harmful to come to worship and hear that "children of darkness" are evil, while "children of light" are good, or to sing "let the light banish darkness."

**It is tempting to brush off these requests as "political correctness." It's challenging to make changes to things that are beloved in our personal traditions. Rather than view this work through the lens of restriction or loss, it may be helpful to focus on the ways attending to our language and using a greater diversity of imagery actually expands our understanding of God, Scripture, and the world around us.**

In the season of Advent, there is such depth and richness to be found in the metaphors of light and darkness, particularly when we understand they are not binary, but rather complementary. As Dr. Gafney shared in a tweet, "I have come to appreciate Advent so much more without the light/dark binary. Rather, I see darkness as the generative space in which light is conceived and from which it is born. Both holy, both life-giving."

Darkness is a place of mystery and expectation. It is the place where hope lives. It is in darkness that gestation and growth take place - deep in the soil or nestled in the womb. Darkness provides space for much-needed rest, and relief from the bright sun and scorching heat. In the beginning, God's creative work happened within the darkness that covered the face of the deep. Our Savior's birth was announced at night, twinkling stars shining brighter because of the darkness of the sky. Under cover of darkness, the Holy Family found safe passage to Egypt.

As you prepare for Advent, Christmas, and Epiphany, there are many ways to attend to this language. The simplest, perhaps, is to invite yourself and others into the practice of noticing where binary uses of light/dark show up in the hymns, prayers, and liturgy. What messages might this language convey? Are there other words that better express the meaning you intend?

Some alternative words for "light" include illumination, brilliance, dawn, brightness, radiance, clarity, divine spark, and glow. Other words to use in place of "darkness" are gloom, shadow, bleakness, obscurity, dusk, twilight, shade, and hiddenness. These words bring to mind different images, which may offer new insights about the text. An example of these alternative words can be found in the Christmas Eve liturgy written by members of the Disrupt Worship Project. The Christmas Proclamation reads:

*The people have stumbled in the abyss for so long but now have their paths illuminated. For those dwelling in a land of deep shadows, radiance shines forth.*

*In the beginning, when the world was in chaos, the divine Spirit hovered over the waters. In that same beginning, there was the Word; and the Word was in God's presence, and the Word was God.*

*God brought forth the bright blessed day and the dark sacred night and declared them to be good.*

*In the fullness of time, the Word, that divine shine, put on flesh to stay among us. And we saw the Word's glory, filled with grace, filled with truth.*

*In Jesus, brilliance illuminated the world, and the shadows did not overcome it.*

*We have been given the gift of glow. Sometimes it is a flicker and sometimes it is a blaze, but the divine shine is within us; it is what we carry into the world.*

*The places of shadows and stumbling yearn for the radiant beams we carry, this holy night.*

As we anticipate God's coming into the world, we keep awake, ever mindful of God's call to love our neighbor. It is for this reason that we attend to our language, and work to express with depth and richness the fullness of God's love for the whole world. 💧

#### **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

- *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, Barbara Brown Taylor
- *God's Holy Darkness*, Sharei Green and Beckah Selnick, illustrated by Nikki Faison
- "Joyful is the Dark"  
*All Creation Sings* hymn 1096
- *Embracing the Light & the Darkness in the Age of Black Lives Matter*, Rev. Dr. Wil Gafney
- ADJ Webinar "The Language of Advent." [swpasynod.org/ministries/diversity](https://swpasynod.org/ministries/diversity)



# THANKSGIVING IN DORMONT



## Pastor Melissa L. Stoller

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**A**lmost 40 years ago, a member at Bethany Lutheran Church in Dormont wondered what could be done to help the community in some way. And while the first community dinner was small, enough people came that the congregation decided to host the free dinner again. And thus, the John Smith Memorial Thanksgiving Dinner began.

Anna Williams remembers that first dinner. These 40 years of coordinating and serving have been a full family affair. “My son didn’t know any other kind of Thanksgiving until he got married!” she said. “And my daughter has been helping since she was two years old; I would be lost without her.”

What was once a few hundred meals has grown exponentially in the past decades, involving many partners in Dormont, including the neighboring Methodist church. Even in 2020, the congregation and volunteers were able to shift to take out and delivery, serving over 1,000 people a full Thanksgiving dinner. The planning committee is preparing for at least that many this year, and while they are not yet back to in-person dining, they hope to begin their free community fish fries in the spring with sit-down meals again.

The dinners have always been free: financial contributions, grants (including Thrivent Action grants), and in-kind donations have always come together to make these

community dinners a reality. And they have sparked additional opportunities to reach out to members of the community. The congregations of Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries, of which Bethany is a member, have worked together to contribute donations for the Bethany Community Cupboard, which include toiletries, paper products, food, and clothing, and have been a lifeline for many in the community, especially in these pandemic times.

**“It is not only a help to the community, but it helps our church family,” says Ms. Williams. The youngest congregation members learn from the oldest, as the meal provides an avenue for any age to help and participate in the mission God is calling them to.**

“When you nourish, fertilize, and work with what God gives you, there are blessings untold!” she added. “And there is no better blessing than doing what God wants you to do: which is to care for others, our brothers and sisters.” 💧



*The J. Edward Lilja Memorial Garden at St. Andrew Lutheran Church, Moon Township*

## HONORING THE SAINTS



### Pastor Larry Mort

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**D**uring 2020, the membership of St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Moon Township began a project to address a growing need in our community. The cost of the traditional burial of loved ones can reach beyond \$10,000. There is a portion of our community for which such expense is not affordable. And yet, they desire to inter their loved ones in a safe space.

**St. Andrew worked to design a memorial garden area on the church grounds that would provide a place where family members could inter their loved ones at a reasonable cost, and in cases of financial distress, no cost at all.**

The central features of the memorial garden are its two columbaria and the scatter garden. Each columbarium will provide space for 64 urns. The number of interments in the garden area is limitless.

The garden is dedicated to the memory of the Rev. J. Edward Lilja, the first pastor of St. Andrew, who died in a violent car crash one year after becoming pastor.

The garden has four scatter beds adorned with various perennial and annual plants. A stone walkway leads to the garden and forms the four beds. The stone path and cross-shaped walkways between the beds provide opportunity for individuals or families to

honor or memorialize loved ones by having the stones engraved with their names.

It is fitting and proper for the church to provide such space for the committal of ashes. To set aside a holy space where family can find comfort and peace in the assurance the cremains of loved ones will be secure and cared for is an extension of the care the congregation provides for members of the parish and the community while they journey through this life.

The garden becomes a space to honor those who have died in faith, and a place for their loved ones (and others) to come and find peace, rest, and hope. It is a more than verbal expression of the gospel of love and grace that extends beyond this life to life eternal.

The goal of the congregation of St. Andrew is to provide a place so members of the community know they are loved and cared for now and into the future. 💧



## STORYTELLING AS VOCATION



**Pastor Peter D. Asplin**

*Assistant to the Bishop*

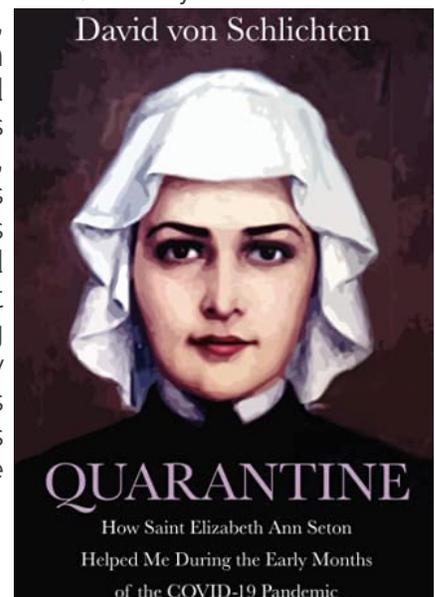
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**A**s Lutherans, we believe that “God works in the life of every person. Every Christian has a baptismal call to ongoing discernment of God’s activity in the world, in the church and in one’s own life.”<sup>1</sup> In fact, we understand that one of the purposes of having a congregation of Christians who gather regularly for worship is that they might encourage the people of God to “see daily life as the primary setting for the exercise of their Christian calling, and to use the gifts of the Spirit for their life together and for their calling in the world.”<sup>2</sup>

We understand a Christian’s vocation to be that which God calls them to in the world. For some people (like myself) that means being a pastor or deacon in the church. For some people it means being a student (an elementary schooler, a high school senior, or a college or graduate student). For many others it is the particular work they do.

In our synod, people walk their vocational journeys in many different ways. Among those vocational paths is one that requires creativity, diligence, hard work, and stick-to-itiveness. Four different Lutherans sat down with me to talk about how they found a vocation in writing, their efforts to be creative, to do the hard work of writing, and the joys of being published and recognized for their work.

Dr. David von Schlichten, author of the recently published book *Quarantine*, found the urge to write to be primarily internal, and it began as a young child. As a nine-year-old, he found the telling of stories, in ways that related to his own life, thrilled him and challenged him. He was happy, then, when teachers or parents recognized his gifts, but the writing was primarily for him. This internal call is something he



<sup>1</sup> ELCA Candidacy Manual (2021), “Appendix A: Guidelines for Discernment,” p. 75.

<sup>2</sup> ELCA Model Constitution for Congregations (2019) \*C4.02.e.

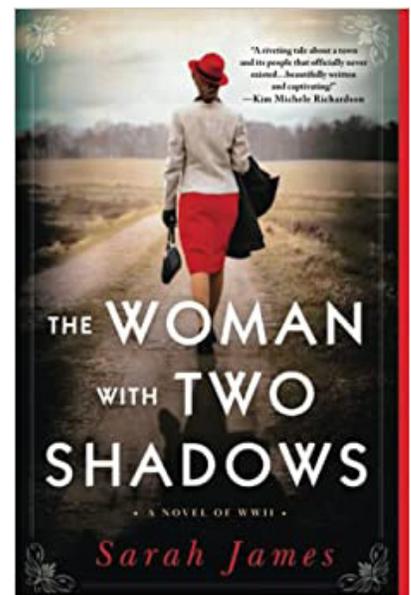
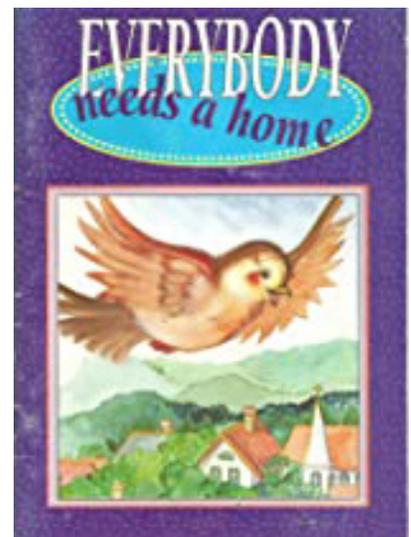
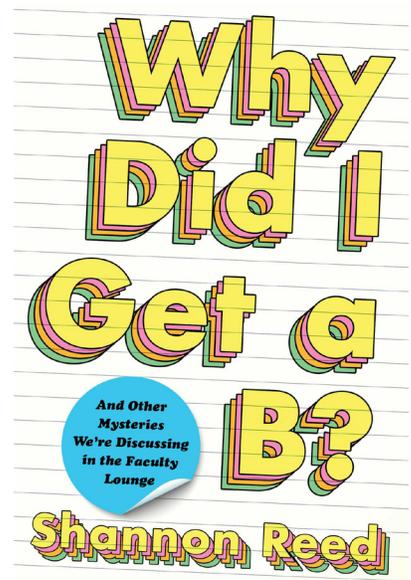
still feels today —although Dr. von Schlichten, a professor at Seton Hill College in Greensburg, appreciates the advice editors and advisors give to strengthen his stories and his writing.

Similar to Dr. von Schlichten, Shannon Reed, a writing professor at the University of Pittsburgh has found herself driven to write since she was young. Professor Reed describes herself as being “more ‘me’ when I write than when I don’t.” Each of us seeks those moments where we are functioning as our best selves, happier, rising to the challenge, resilient. For Professor Reed, writing is transformation and joyous discovery. But it’s also, for her, work. Professor Reed finds the discipline of sitting down each day and writing, producing, even when you’re not feeling it, is what leads to the many, many moments in her life where writing fills her with joy and encourages her to experience the sacred, the presence of the Holy in her work. Shannon’s first book, *Why Did I Get a B*, shares vignettes of her career prior to joining the faculty at Pitt, sharing the joys and challenges of teaching as both vocation and love.

Our synod’s very own Myra Fozard is an author as well. Mrs. Fozard, like others, began writing as a child. As time went on, she found two different realities driving her creativity. The first was an effort to understand her experiences: “Every time something happens, I have to write it down and make a history of it.” Her first book *Everybody Needs a Home* was inspired by Ted Schroeder and Bob Sites, who were leading a writing workshop for writers from across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. The book, unfortunately out of print now, was the result of years of storytelling, working with children and youth, and the encouragement of leaders and the Holy Spirit in her life.

All three of these writers told me that curiosity and their own reading has driven their publishing endeavours. This is equally true for Sarah James, who grew up here in Pittsburgh attending one of our local congregations. Her book, *The Woman With Two Shadows*, grew out of her own reading about the Manhattan Project, both a triumph and a terror to those who were there for the first successes. Sarah’s curiosity has driven her writing since she was young, and she found support from her family and friends to be integral to giving her the ability and the inspiration to continue working on writing—and to navigating publishing—which is a whole other challenging subject for a writer.

Creativity, curiosity, hard work, the encouragement of family and friends. All of these form part of the Christian vocation and contribute to the gifts that writers give to the world and to each of us who read. Truly these four creative people show the reality that vocation is lived out in daily life. 💧





Leading Change. Empowering People.

## LUTHERAN SERVICES IN AMERICA



### Charlotte Haberaecker

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**F**rom its earliest days, Lutheran social ministry has been about community and bringing people together so they can lead their best lives. This spirit of loving our neighbor remains a guiding principle for the 300 Lutheran social ministries within our Lutheran Services in America network. With the power of 250,000 employees and 150,000 volunteers, our national network is achieving a healthier, more equitable future for one in 50 people in America every year. It's who we are as Lutheran Services in America, and, importantly, it's who we are as Lutherans.

We walk alongside people of all ages and backgrounds—from children, youth, and families to older adults, refugees, people with disabilities, and more—and tackle underlying challenges that hold people back from realizing their potential. Lutheran social ministry is deeply ingrained in the fabric of over 1,400 communities where we create deep relationships that allow us to meet the whole needs of people. We are united in purpose to empower people to achieve their full potential and live with independence, dignity, and respect. At the national level, we serve as a force for change by bringing Lutheran social ministries together with strategic partners in academia, philanthropy, and business to address the most complex issues affecting society today.

Our leaders in your synod include David Fenoglio, a former Lutheran Services in America board chair who leads Lutheran

SeniorLife, which has supported children, families, and older adults for more than 100 years. George Trauner leads Bethesda Lutheran Services to build promising futures for children, youth, and families. These dedicated agents of change demonstrate our faith in action and our commitment to ensuring that all people thrive. Our shared calling to love and care for our neighbor is a force for bringing people and resources together to solve problems in ways that go beyond what any one organization can achieve on its own. Our decidedly different faith-based network combines time, talent, and treasure to advance policies and programs that drive systemic change for people and communities.

When change needs a network, Lutheran Services in America is committed to achieving meaningful, long-lasting change so that all people and communities can thrive. 💧



## GRANT SPOTLIGHT: CHRIST MILLVALE



### Pastor Erin Evans

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Christ Lutheran Church in Millvale is committed to being “in the neighborhood, for good,” and has a long history of feeding our neighbors. Many parishioners have led this ministry over the decades, building continuity and trust in our community. Now open Wednesday evenings, and Monday and Friday mornings, we serve 35 to 45 families per week.

Our current system allows clients to view the entire inventory and then select exactly what their family needs. Ten to fifteen volunteers from the congregation each week serve by greeting clients, unpacking and sorting donations, and filling orders. We could not do this without their hard work and dedication to this ministry and serving the people of our community.

One unique facet of our pantry is a partnership with 412 Food Rescue, a local non-profit dedicated to preventing food waste and to feeding the community. You can read about their multiple programs on their website, but as one of their non-profit partners, they provide our pantry with both regular donations and welcome “surprises” each month! The pantry gets produce, meat, snack food, slightly damaged items from grocery stores, bakery specials, and overstocks from local stores. It's like Christmas morning when the regular delivery from a local Target shows up on a Monday. We can't wait to see what we'll have to give away that day! We love

the produce, baked goods, frozen foods, and surprise deliveries of 100 bags of arugula and 66 honeydew melons!

**However, the grant received from the Ethel L. Verney Fund of the Southwestern PA Synod provides the resources to keep the basics stocked. This grant is used to regularly purchase shelf-stable products and canned goods.** With the rising cost of food, more and more families are coming to the pantry just to keep their cupboards stocked. This grant provides the clerical support needed to keep the pantry running, and to cover the cost of utilities for several freezers and a refrigerator.

We are not only feeding our community but building relationships. When we open our doors, freezers, and refrigerators three days a week, we are opening conversations and showing compassion. Because of the Verney Fund, we can keep the pantry doors open, ready to receive 50 pounds of frozen French fries and ready to care of our neighbors. 💧



## CHRIST'S LOVE THROUGH COOKIES



**Melanie Thomas**

*Member of Faith Lutheran Church, White Oak*

*Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers,  
by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Hebrews 13:2*

I had heard tales of the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly and the baked goods that were made to share with others, as well as the cookie tables present at the 2013 Churchwide Assembly that was held in Pittsburgh. At our second meeting for this year's Churchwide Assembly, one of my questions to the group was, "What baked goods am I making for churchwide?"

This was my first time to a Churchwide Assembly, and I certainly wanted to make a good first impression. It was my time to shine. To be honest, I already had a menu of items planned, mostly cookies. This year's menu consisted of peanut butter blossoms, gluten free peanut butter cookies, orange creamsicle cookies, snickerdoodles, and cherry and blueberry squares. I was prepared to feed the representatives from our synod as well as those at other tables.

Imagine my excitement when word spread that SWPA had cookies and baked goods. The bishop took a container to share with synods on the other side of the plenary hall. A representative from the Northern Texas-Northern Louisiana synod came back six times for blueberry squares and snickerdoodles. It was wonderful! I would do it all over again and probably bring more.

But as the saying goes, "Lutherans: we are more than just cookies after worship." For five days, I was able to share Christ's hospitality and love for all in my own way—my love for baking. There is always an abundance at God's table that can be shared with others. It brings me joy to see others enjoy what I have made. I am able to share what I love with other synods across the country. Being brought together by faith, fellowship, and a few tasty treats; how much better does it get?

We embody the Word in many and various ways. My way involves a little sugar, copious amounts of chocolate, and a splash of love. I hope I was able to satisfy the sweet tooth of some at Churchwide Assembly this year. 💧

*P.S. Enjoy one of my cookie recipes  
on the next page!*

# ORANGE CREAMSICLE COOKIES



- ½ cup butter, softened
  - 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
  - 1 egg
  - ½ teaspoon orange extract
  - 1 box orange cake mix
  - 4 drops orange food coloring (or 1 part red to 2 parts yellow)
  - White chocolate chips (recipe calls for 1 cup, I used a whole bag and liked it better)
  - Powdered sugar
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Line cookie sheets with parchment paper.
  2. In a large mixing bowl, beat together the butter, orange extract, cream cheese, add egg with an electric mixer until smooth. Add the cake mix and mix well.
  3. Optional: Add food coloring if desired until the cookie dough reaches your desired orange color.
  4. Stir in white chocolate chips. Chill the dough for 30 minutes in the refrigerator.
  5. Form dough into balls (I use a cookie scoop). Roll each in the powdered sugar and then place on the parchment paper lined cookie sheets.
  6. Bake at for 12 to 13 minutes. Cool on the cookie sheet for 2 to 3 minutes, then remove from pan and finish cooling on a wire rack.

## SYNOD STAFF PRESENCE | JUL-SEP 22

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:**

Emmanuel, Prospect

Immanuel, Irwin

St. James, Ligonier

Evangelical, Worthington

Perry Highway, Wexford

St. John, Connoquenessing

Forks-Zion, Leechburg

Rider, West Sunbury

St. John, New Castle

Harrold Zion, Greensburg

Spring Church, Apollo

St. Matthias, Greensburg

Hope, Cranberry

St. Andrew, Shadyside

Trinity, Latrobe

# 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](mailto:sandy.delorenze@swpasynod.org) or 412-367-8222.*

## Ordination Anniversaries:

### November-January

10 Years: Deacon Michelle Kunkle

15 Years: Pastor Peter Asplin

40 Years: Pastor James West

## Installations:

### Pastor Katie McNeal

St. John Lutheran Church, Mars,  
September 25

### Pastor Sarah Lee-Faulkner

Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Irwin,  
October 16

## Retirement:

Pastor James West,  
September 1

## Welcome:

Pastor Deb Thompson  
Virginia Synod

## Marriage:

Fiona Lubold (Synod Council) and  
Jordan Pohley, October 1, 2022.

## In Memoriam:

**Bishop L. Alexander Black**,  
former Bishop of the West Virginia-  
Western Maryland Synod,  
July 26, 2022

**Pastor Thomas R. Stennett**,  
August 22, 2022

**George Beck**,  
formerly served as synod custodian,  
September 16, 2022

**Jeffrey "Benny" Benson**,  
brother of Pastor Joel Benson,  
September 16, 2022

**Pastor Frederick B. Zikeli**,  
September 24, 2022

**David Filbert**,  
brother of Pastor Dorothy Worth,  
October 1, 2022

**Eileen Bowser**,  
wife of Pastor Mont Bowser,  
October 5

**Pastor Gerald Huhn**,  
October 9

## Prayer Requests:

Sister Mildred McCracken,  
Denny Barkley

View the most up-to-date list at:  
[swpasynod.org/prayer](http://swpasynod.org/prayer)



*Installation of the Rev. Dr. Alexander Sumo as Pastor of Pittsburgh Lutheran United Ministries (PLUM), July 30*

# Calendar of Causes

SPOTLIGHT ON SOCIAL MINISTRY PARTNERS

*November*



## *Promising Futures*

Promising futures for children, youth, and families through individualized mental and behavioral health services provided in a residential, school or community setting.

**BETHESDA1919.ORG**

*December*



**GLADE RUN**  
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Issue No. 12 **STORIES FROM THE ROAD**



MORE STORIES & CONNECTIONS:  
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## *Devotional*: **GATHERING TOGETHER**



### **Pastor Paul Guesu**

*Pastor of St. Matthias Evangelical Lutheran Church, Greensburg*  
pastorpaul7@yahoo.com | 724-834-2457

**N**ovember is a time of gathering together: at our polling locations; for a Thanksgiving meal; even in Black Friday lines. It sounds like a time of excitement and celebration. But for many of us, the reality of gathering together is more likely a time of heated debates about political affiliations, strained relationships with relatives, and hostile crowds trying to get a head start on Christmas shopping.

When Jesus commands His disciples, and us, to “love our neighbors”, it’s important to remember that He doesn’t command us to “convince” our neighbors to change their political views... to “like” those family members that we find annoying at Thanksgiving... or to “control” a hostile crowd gathered outside of WalMart on Black Friday.

Instead, Jesus commands us to love our neighbors. But how? St. Paul reminds us, “God shows His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) And in the same way, Jesus calls us to show that same kind of sacrificial love, humility, and grace to all of our neighbors, even those we consider our “enemies.” Could that love be shown in listening, rather than arguing a point? Or including someone whom we’d rather ignore? Or showing courtesy, kindness, and generosity in a place that’s fraught with everything to the contrary? That’s the kind of love Jesus gave on the cross... for you... for me... and for all of us. 💧