

Prints of Peace



Pastor's Letter:

A *watershed moment* is a turning point, the exact moment when the direction of an activity or a situation changes. From that point on, things are not the same as how they used to be. Sometimes watershed moments are obvious – a wedding day, the birth of a child, a parent's death. But other times, we can only recognize watershed moments by in retrospect. For instance, a business didn't know it at the time, but the decision to hire two new employees was what set them on the course to making it big. That hiring was, in retrospect, a *watershed moment* for the business. Or perhaps a person suffers a heart attack. At the time, they understandably think of it as terrible. But looking back ten years later, they can see that it was because of that scare that they started to live their life differently, and *better*. The heart attack was a *watershed moment* in their life.

I wonder if we're approaching a watershed moment at Prince of Peace. Last year's annual congregational meeting recognized that *something had to change*. The financial status quo of Prince of Peace was no longer sustainable. Throughout 2023, Congregation Council and our new Task Force have been working hard to develop a plan to help us come much closer to a balanced budget. It's become clear to me in this process that it's not just about money. New ideas for ministry have popped up. New ideas for fellowship and learning. New avenues for connecting with the community. There is something in the air, a newness, a hopefulness. We recognize that we're not trying to find a way to turn back the clock, and get back to "the way things were," as though we could. Rather, we're turning the clock *forward*, and visioning *what Prince of Peace might become*.

If this plan is going to work, it's going to take the commitment of lots of people, not just the council or Task Force. It's going to involve you. You're going to hear a lot about the plan over the next two months. (Read about it here in this newsletter!) And I think you might just catch the excitement of it. If successful, the plan itself will do something important – it will make us more financially stable. That's good, but it's hardly a watershed moment.

But the *excitement* that goes along with this plan, the *hopefulness* that's woven throughout, the *trust and faith* that it requires – well, those things may just have the power to transform us. And we might not just be a more financially stable church, we might also be a *transformed and renewed* church.

I believe that this just might be our watershed moment. I believe we might look back in ten years and say with joy, "That's when it all started to change. That's when we started to become who we are today." I believe in this because I've seen the hope, the excitement, the faith in the eyes of Task Force and council members. And I believe in this because I believe in the power of our original watershed moment, that watery moment when we were baptized, when God promised, "You are my child. And I have big, big plans for you."

I wonder what God's big, big plans are for the future of Prince of Peace. We're going to find out together!

Rev. Michael J. Scholtes

Rev. Michael J. Scholtes

Date:	Greeters	Lay Reader	Assisting Minister	Ushers	Power Point and Camera	Acolyte	Offering Counters
Sept. 3	Vivian Fahr, Traci Rumsey	Sherry Hock	Bob Schuette	Sherk and June Jones	John Martocci	Isabel Baker	Jim Jennings, Bob Gist
Sept. 10	Connie Itterly, Brenda Hughes	Mary Hendershot	Kale Baker	Sara Godshalk, Sue Reinhart	Tina Johns	Landon Horn	Jackie Horn, Connie Itterly
Sept. 17	Georgia and John Suranofsky	Quincy Miller	Marlene Stana	Bob Gist, Connie Itterly	Antonioli Family	Alex Scholtes	Jim Jennings, Dave Karner
Sept. 24	Kale Baker, Sara Godshalk	Kim Jennings	Tina Johns	Marlene and Butch Stana	Cathy Mullen	Landon Horn	Jackie Horn, Scott Schipps
Oct. 1	Brooks Baker, Sue Reinhart	Sara Godshalk	April Miller	Brenda Hughes, Traci Rumsey	John Martocci	Isabel Baker	Jim Jennings, Brenda Hughes

Communion Assistants:

September 3: Tina Johns, Jim Jennings
 September 10: Marlene Stana, April Miller
 September 17: Diane Hahn, Laraine Brands
 September 24: Connie Itterly, Brooks Baker
 October 1: Laraine Brands, Tina Johns

Altar Guild September: Connie Itterly & Diane Searfass
 Altar Guild October: Cathy Mullen & Phyllis Bisher

Thank you for your willingness to serve!!!

If you are unable to fulfill an assignment, please find someone to take your place and let Pastor Scholtes know of the change as soon as possible.

For last minute changes be sure to leave the message on Pastor Scholtes' voice mail (610-588-2355) or email him at PastorMJS@gmail.com.

ARE YOU GETTING PASTORMAIL?

Pastor Scholtes sends out emails to the congregation almost every day. These *PastorMails* contain information about upcoming events, about recent decisions made in the church, and generally help to keep us all connected. If you are not receiving them, please send him a note at pastorMJS@gmail.com to get added to the list or sign up at our church website (popbangor.org). They are also archived at popbangor.org/pastormail.



Weis Grocery Receipts – We just received a check for **\$305.14** for **\$30,514.00** of grocery receipts! **Thank you to all who save their Weis receipts for Prince of Peace!** Keep those grocery receipts coming! Please note we can only use slips from the Blue Valley store and we cannot use receipts for gift cards, milk, tobacco, sales tax, alcohol and pharmacy items. These items are deducted from the slips. Thank you for your continued support.

—Janet Martocci

Interested in Mah Jong? Well, come out on September 16 at 6:30pm, and learn the basics of the game. If you would like to share an appetizer with the group, please bring one. Iced tea will be provided. Questions? Jackie Horn 610-810-7268



POP's Treasures Boutique will be open on the following dates:

Sept. 8 & 9; Oct. 13 & 14; Nov. 10 & 11; and Dec. 8 & 9.

Hours: Fridays 10 a.m. -2 p.m., Saturdays 9 a.m. – Noon.

POP's Treasures is an exciting and challenging new venture at POP church. We continue to have many new visitors who are finding treasures to take home. We continue to ask for your gently used donations, which we will gladly receive if you reach out to us, or drop off on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. One of our challenges is spreading the word. Word of mouth is the best advertisement. Signs will be out noting sale dates. Follow us on Facebook. We have limited space for storage. We will be getting an outside storage container, but due to availability of workers in preparing the area, we have yet to start the project. We have resorted to storing items under some tables. Bear with us while we work through some of these difficulties. We have been very fortunate to have people want to donate or help in the boutique. We will be setting up a schedule for volunteers, so if you would like to help in any way, please contact us. We also ask if you are interested in any items, please let us know. It's been unfortunate, but some things have gone missing from our displays. We would like for you to reach out to us if you needed to pick something up, and wanted to pay for it, but we weren't there when you were. We would love for everyone to visit the store to see the array of items we have for sale Committee members: Valerie Kessler, Mary O'Meally, Jackie Horn



**SAVE
THE DATES!**

Military Limerick:

*Our military has no fear
Serving our country far and near
They go where they're told
Being ever so bold
But that's the burden they bear.*



Would you like to give a soldier some Christmas cheer this year? Yes, you say, then how about writing out some Christmas cards for the military. If you don't have cards, see Holly Blakeslee. On the outside of the envelope write "American Soldier." The cards need to be in the church by **November 12th**. Questions: See a member of Social Ministry. Thank you for always supporting this ministry!

Fall Rummage Sale Date Change: The Rummage Sale will be held on Friday, November 10th from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday, November 11th from 9 a.m. to Noon.



P.U.M.P Update: Donations of any type of **PASTA, PASTA, PASTA plus mac 'n cheese** are greatly needed and much appreciated right now. P.U.M.P. is very low on these staples.

NexTrex Challenge:

Prince of Peace is participating in the NexTrex Recycling Challenge. Recycle your household bags and wrap into Trex's Earth-friendly composite decking and railing. (Plastic must be clean, dry and free of food and organic residue.) **From the store:** produce bags, store bags, ice bags. **From the pantry:** Ziploc and other re-closable bags, cereal box liners, case overwrap, bread bags. **From your front door:** newspaper sleeves, dry cleaning bags, bubble wrap, plastic e-commerce mailers. **How does this benefit Prince of Peace?** If we meet our donation goals, we will receive 1 free Trex outdoor bench every six months and we are helping our community. Questions? Contact Jackie Horn 610-810-7268

Important News from The Task Force:

For more than ten years, Prince of Peace has been able to thrive despite unbalanced budgets, through careful watching of expenditures, and also through occasional dips into our investment portfolio. But there isn't enough left in the investments for more than a few more dips. In response to this, at the annual congregational meeting in November 2022, the congregation passed the following motion:

Council shall be directed to conduct an organization wide study to identify what structural and operational changes are necessary in order to better align our future anticipated revenues with our future anticipated expenses. Council may elect to conduct the study itself, or designate a task force to complete the work. Council or the task force conducting this study will report to the congregation quarterly on progress. A final report on findings and recommendations will be presented at the November 2023 Annual Meeting. Additionally, council will present a proposed 2024 budget that shows proposed 2024 spending reflecting a 50% decrease on the "new money" line as compared to the 2023 budget approved at the November 2022 Annual Meeting.

Congregation council developed a Task Force to work on this study. The Task Force is composed of all members of council, plus several other people: Brooks Baker, Chip Harrison, Jim Jennings, and Brenda Stauffer. This group has been meeting regularly for all of 2023. We spent a good portion of time in study of our current finances, getting to fully understand every aspect of our finances, including our expenses, income, and what a sustainable model of ministry might look like for us in the future.

Then we brainstormed and dreamed, discussed, and debated. And now, we have come up with a plan that succeeds in reducing the "new money" line by more than 50%, as mandated by the congregational motion. Some Task Force members are currently working with the Finance Committee to include this plan in the 2024 budget that will be voted on at the November 2023 annual meeting. Some Task Force members are currently working with the Stewardship Committee to plan the 2024 Stewardship Campaign, which will help us achieve this plan.

We want to share with you what this plan looks like in broad strokes here. In the October newsletter, we will break down each of these items in more detail and explain them. We will also explain them and answer your questions at a special informational meeting to be held after worship on Sunday, October 15. If you have questions or concerns before that meeting, please speak to any member of the Task Force.

Here is a list of the proposed items, along with the expected dollar amount that will change our budget:

Postage.....	\$ 500
Insurance.....	\$ 1,300
Mission Support (10% to 7.5%)	\$ 4,200
Promoting Weis cards after church.....	\$ 5,000
Advertise building rentals.....	\$ 1,000
Jacktown stand.....	\$ 5,000
Classes (baking, canning, painting, etc.) ..	\$ 200/class
Increase giving.....	\$ 10,000
TOTAL.....	\$ 27,000 (+ \$200/class)

Friday, Sept. 1	Psalm 26:1-8; Jeremiah 15:1-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12
Saturday, Sept. 2	Psalm 26:1-8; Jeremiah 15:10-14; Matthew 8:14-17
Sunday, Sept. 3	Jeremiah 15:15-21; Psalm 26:1-8; Romans 12:9-21; Matthew 16:21-28
Monday, Sept. 4	Psalm 17; 2 Samuel 11:2-26; Revelation 3:1-6
Tuesday, Sept. 5	Psalm 17; 2 Samuel 11:27b-12:15; Revelation 3:7-13
Wednesday, Sept. 6	Psalm 17; Jeremiah 17:5-18; Matthew 12:22-32
Thursday, Sept. 7	Psalm 119:33-40; Ezekiel 24:1-14; 2 Corinthians 12:11-21
Friday, Sept. 8	Psalm 119:33-40; Ezekiel 24:15-27; Romans 10:15b-21
Saturday, Sept. 9	Psalm 119:33-40; Ezekiel 33:1-6; Matthew 23:29-36
Sunday, Sept. 10	Ezekiel 33:7-11; Psalm 119:33-40; Romans 13:8-14; Matt. 18:15-20
Monday, Sept. 11	Psalm 119:65-72; Leviticus 4:27-31; 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:11-17
Tuesday, Sept. 12	Psalm 119:65-72; Deuteronomy 17:2-13; Romans 13:1-7
Wednesday, Sept. 13	Psalm 119:65-72; Leviticus 16:1-5, 20-28; Matthew 21:18-22
Thursday, Sept. 14	Psalm 103:8-13; Genesis 37:12-36; 1 John 3:11-16
Friday, Sept. 15	Psalm 103:8-13; Genesis 41:53-42:17; Acts 7:9-16
Saturday, Sept. 16	Psalm 103:8-13; Genesis 45:1-20; Matthew 6:7-15
Sunday, Sept. 17	Genesis 50:15-21; Psalm 103:8-13; Romans 14:1-12; Matt. 18:21-35
Monday, Sept. 18	Psalm 133; Genesis 48:8-22; Hebrews 11:23-29
Tuesday, Sept. 19	Psalm 133; Genesis 49:29-50:14; Romans 14:13-15:2
Wednesday, Sept. 20	Psalm 133; Genesis 50:22-26; Mark 11:20-25
Thursday, Sept. 21	Psalm 145:1-8; Nahum 1:1, 14-2:2; 2 Corinthians 13:1-4
Friday, Sept. 22	Psalm 145:1-8; Nahum 2:3-13; 2 Corinthians 13:5-10
Saturday, Sept. 23	Psalm 145:1-8; Zephaniah 2:13-15; Matthew 19:23-30
Sunday, Sept. 24	Jonah 3:10 – 4:11; Psalm 145:1-8; Philippians 1:21-30; Matt. 20:1-16
Monday, Sept. 25	Psalm 106:1-12; Genesis 27:1-29; Romans 16:1-16
Tuesday, Sept. 26	Psalm 106:1-12; Genesis 28:10-17; Romans 16:17-20
Wednesday, Sept. 27	Psalm 106:1-12; Isaiah 41:1-13; Matthew 18:1-5
Thursday, Sept. 28	Psalm 25:1-9; Ezekiel 12:17-28; James 4:11-16
Friday, Sept. 29	Psalm 25:1-9; Ezekiel 18:5-18; Acts 13:32-41
Saturday, Sept. 30	Psalm 25:1-9; Ezekiel 18:19-24; Mark 11:27-33

"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." (2 Corinthians 4:6, NKJV)

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Read these on your computer or on your phone! Go to DailyLectio.net, where you can sign up for daily emails, or download the app for iPhone or Android!



Please keep these people in prayer on the anniversary of their birth!

Alani Blount, September 2
Christopher Confalone, September 2
James Neiley, September 7
Micah Smith, September 9
Douglas Hock, September 9
Mary Jane Hower, September 10
Sheri Oessenick, September 11
Ronald Getz, September 12
Melissa Frack, September 12
Jessica Reinhart, September 14
Thomas Amy, September 15
Janessa Baker, September 15
Alyce Hower, September 16
Phyllis Bisher, September 17
Samuel Blakeslee, September 18
Wanda McCammon, September 18
Levi Ott, September 19
Justin Ott, September 21
Kelly Hill, September 22
Kay Parsons, September 24
Patricia Duran, September 25
Lauran Gillow, September 25
Arlene Miller, September 25
Mckenna Baker, September 25
Mildred Clancy, September 26
Staci Hock, September 27
Jayden Garis, September 28
Bruce Antonioli, September 29
Matthew Schipps, September 30
Amy Newhard, September 30



On-site (9:45 on Sundays)

Weather permitting, we will worship *outside* in our grove on the first Sunday of each month through September!

Online / Facebook / Telephone

Watch our worship each week at our website (popbangor.org/video-worship). Or watch it on our Facebook page (facebook.com/popbangor). You can also call in to hear our worship each week at 877-POP-2-POP (877-767-2767). New videos and audio files will be added each Monday.

NARRATIVE WORSHIP

Ever wonder what all the parts of worship mean? Ever wonder why we say what we say and sing what we sing? Come to worship at 9:45 am on Sunday, September 10 and find out! We will hold a “narrative worship” service that day. That day, we will have a narrator who will interrupt worship from time to time to explain to us what we just did, or what we’re about to do. You’ll leave understanding worship much better! (And don’t worry – we’ll work it out so that it’s no longer than a regular worship service, or at least not *much* longer.)

RECENT PASTORAL ACTS

Baptism: Layna Mae Hill, August 5
Wedding: Ivette Morales & Horst Bratke (non-members), July 22

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

The August council meeting occurred after the newsletter deadline.

Social Ministry thanks everyone for their generous donation of school supplies to the Slater Family Network. We also thank Georgia Suranofsky and Marlene Stana for dropping the supplies off to them. SFN was overwhelmed with our generosity.

thank you

Stewardship Thought: Generosity Walks Through the Doors at Prince of Peace

The Last Sunday of the month is now known as “Generosity Sunday”. I was ushering on the last Sunday in July and was amazed at what I saw. When the door opened and people exchanged greetings, they then moved into the Narthex to find the open drawer to place their P.U.M.P. donations for our food insecure neighbors and put their plastic bags in containers or the overflow piles that will be exchanged for bench for our grove. Some others placed school supplies in the big basket for the Slater Family Network so those who come to SFN can receive new supplies. Kids can start the school year feeling excited with their new tools including a backpack. As people entered the sanctuary, they placed coins or bills in the “Joyful Noise” bucket and more did the same as they left the building through the doors they entered. \$108.00 was collected to do God’s work beyond our doors. I couldn’t help but thank God right then and there for our community of believer’s generosity. He provides us with opportunities to respond to others in His name. We show the love of Christ with every item brought and shared.

1 Chronicles 29:14: Who am I and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly? Since everything comes from you, we have given you that which comes from our own hand.

Feeling Grateful,
Georgia Suranofsky

Did you know There are 3 Trustees that oversee the Endowment Fund?

Trustees are nominated after being identified as candidates, just like a council member nomination to be voted on at the annual meeting. The current Trustees are Jim Jennings, Georgia Suranofsky and Denny Horn.

Listed below are some of the primary responsibilities of the Trustees:

- Oversee the investment portfolio of the sub funds.
- Maintain proper records on the sub funds and contributions.
- Report to Council and to the congregation at the Annual Meeting.
- Make disbursement from the general fund of the Endowment to approved sub funds.
- Make disbursements from a sub fund to pay expenses associated with the sub fund.



The Trustees are our “experts” on matters specific to the Fund. This may include being a source of information for Council or serving as an ambassador for the Fund with interested contributors who may need help making gifts. Trustees work to find an equitable balance of the necessary work among themselves.

The Council will be looking for members who may be interested in being nominated for one Trustee position in 2024. Please speak to Council President, Connie Itterly for more information.

Please talk with one of the trustees if you have any questions about their roles. –*Georgia Suranofsky*



Sunday Coffee Hour in Fellowship Hall resumes on September 16.

Coffee hour will continue on Sundays after the church service in the fall. Come join us and bring someone with you! Coffee hours are hosted each week by two or more people. If you are interested in hosting coffee hours, please sign up on the sheet on the bulletin board in the hallway outside Fellowship Hall. Hosting involves setting up coffee and tea and supplying baked goods/snacks. Members of the Coffee Hour Team are available to help if needed: Karen Karner, Janet Martocci, Cathy Mullen and Sue Reinhart.



Join us!

POPS (Prince of Peace Seekers) gatherings begin on September 14, from 10 a.m.- Noon, in the Fellowship Hall. Coffee, tea, and snacks are available. We meet for a time of spiritual growth, discussion, and fellowship. We have some topics planned to spark your spiritual imagination!

On September 14 and 21, Georgia Suranofsky will lead sessions on the topic of generosity. Over the past few months, the congregation has had the opportunity to write down and share with each other expressions of generosity we have encountered. We have learned that generosity is around us. Some of us would rather give generously than to receive an act of generosity. Why? During this 2-week time of conversation around this topic, we will do a few exercises to see how these expressions show up in our own lives and in our church and discuss what expressions of generosity we might grow in both individually and in our church.

On September 28, Martin Yazdzik, Minister of Music will lead a discussion on Music and the Spirit.

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Karner or Janet Martocci.

Special Offering to Lutheran Congregational Services



September is when you will find a special envelope to make a special offering to Lutheran Congregational Services. Lutheran Congregational Services (LCS) is an educational and social ministry organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). We reach out to local congregations through our connections with the Southeastern and Northeastern Pennsylvania Synods of the ELCA.

LCS uses a hands-on approach to identify the needs of churches, parishioners, and the wider community. Check out any of the links below to learn more how you support make a difference:

Lutheran Disaster Response-Eastern PA: <https://libertylutheran.org/community-services/disaster-response/>

Grief Recovery: <https://libertylutheran.org/congregational-services/congregational-support/grief-recovery/>

Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training:

<https://libertylutheran.org/congregational-services/congregational-support/lay-eucharistic-visitor-training/>

Consultation Services: <https://libertylutheran.org/congregational-services/congregational-support/consulting-services/>



Dear Prince of Peace,

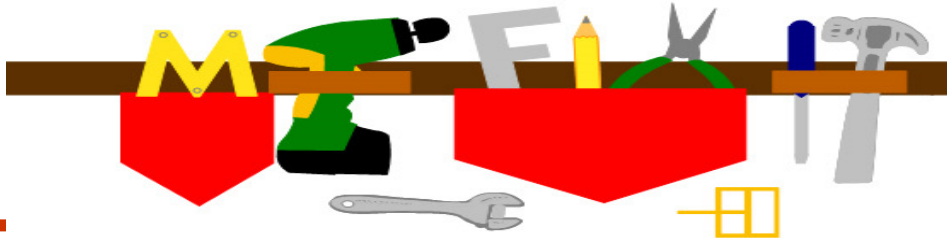
Thank you so much for your support of my graduation from NCC! Your love and guidance are much appreciated as I continue my journey through higher education and adult life.

Sincerely,
Lauren Harrison

A Thank You Letter was received from The Rev. Benjamin A. Hogue, Interim Director, ELCA Global Mission Funding for Prince of Peace's gift of \$2,5000.00 to ELCA Global Missions.

Read the letter on the GRATITUDE BOARD located on the wall between the church offices.

Thank You!



COMMUNITY MR. FIX IT:

You may remember that last year, Prince of Peace identified a "Community Mr. Fix It" program as something we might like to start. The idea is this: There may be people in our community (members of POP or not) who need small projects done at their homes but cannot afford to hire a contractor. They can reach out to Prince of Peace, and we will try to connect someone who can help take care of the project for the price of materials only. We've been working on it behind the scenes and have now found someone who is willing to take charge of the *projects*. What we still need is someone to work with Brenda Stauffer to be our contact person. These people will gather information and organize the projects before we hand them over to our Handy Man volunteer. If this is you, please speak to Brenda Stauffer. *-Pastor Scholtes*

Join Us For...

God's work.
Our hands.



Lutheran Disaster Response is collecting items to assemble clean-up kits and hygiene kits. The list of items needed is long, at least 50 of each is being donated by all the churches in our synod. Prince of Peace signed up to donate 50 of each of the following: individually wrapped bars of soap, up to 12 oz. bottles of shampoo and conditioner (nothing larger please). In order to not get more than we need of any one item, there's a sign-up sheet on the counter in the Narthex. You may place your items in the basket provided under the coat rack in the Narthex by **September 3rd**.

Volunteers will meet on **September 10th** from Noon to 3 p.m. at the Lutheran Center, 2354 Grove Rd. Allentown, to put the kits together. Would you like to volunteer to assemble kits? A sign-up sheet is on the counter in the Narthex.

Questions: see Georgia Suranofsky or Mary O'Meally



Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
 2445 Lake Minsi Drive (Johnsonville)
 Bangor, Pennsylvania 18013
 Office Phone: 610-588-2355

Website: www.popburangor.org
Online Coordinator: Heather Scholtes
lotsofsocks@live.com

Worship and Holy Communion Schedule:
Sundays at 9:45 a.m. – Join us!!

- **Pastor: Rev. Michael J. Scholtes**
- **home: 610-588-2314 - PastorMJS@gmail.com**
- **Volunteer Pastoral Assist. Larry Rissmiller**
610-588-4669
- **Minister of Music: Martin Yazdzik**
- **Bookkeeper: Joyce Weishaupt**
- **Financial Secretary: Mary O’Meally**
- **Custodian: Brittnee Evans**
- **Parish Nurse: Justine Saviet, 610-730-7895,**
cesarijustine1080@gmail.com
- **Administrative Assistant: Annette Buss**
- **Admin. Asst’s Office Hours: Monday, Tuesday,**
Wednesday, Friday 9am–Noon
Thursday: 1 to 4 pm
- Admin. Asst’s email: poplcbangor@gmail.com**

Congregation Council Members:

Connie Itterly - President	Brenda Hughes
Traci Rumsey - Vice President	Jackie Horn
Tina Johns - Secretary	Kerri Miller
Kale Baker	Dave Karner
Sara Godshalk	Marlene Stana
Rev. Michael Scholtes	Kathy Williams

Would you like to place an article in the monthly newsletter? Highlight your ministry? Post a Thank you? Make an announcement?

EARLY SUBMISSIONS ARE APPRECIATED!

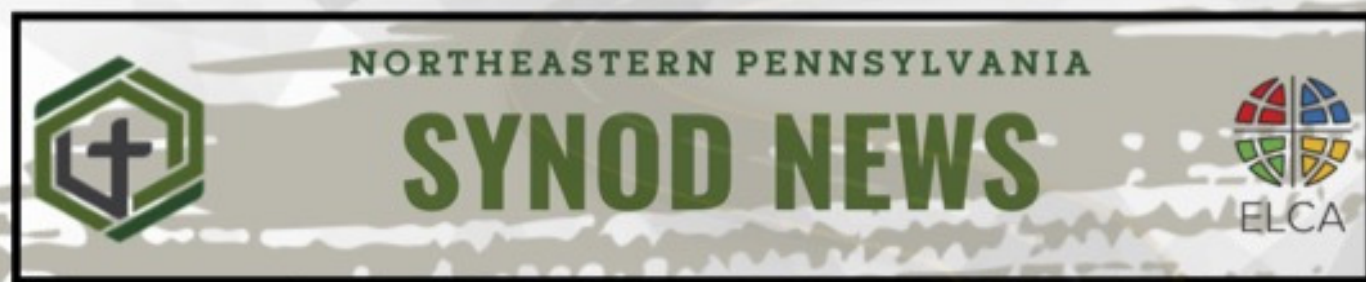
October 2023 Newsletter is:
Tuesday, September 12th at
Noon

You may email your submissions to
poplcbangor@gmail.com
Or give a handwritten items to
Annette Buss

****Items received**
after the deadline
will go into next month’s
newsletter.**

**OUR PURPOSE
 STATEMENT**

We, the people of Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church, will actively seek and serve Christ in all people.



THE THREE ROADS TO VITALITY

As we gather together in the embrace of faith and fellowship throughout the synod (from assemblies, worship, ordinations, anniversaries, and to other synod-wide events) we are reminded of the powerful journey we are on as a Church with a capital C. Our commitment to Christ's teachings has allowed us to evolve beyond mere existence and instead embrace life abundantly. Throughout our synod over the past few years, we've been celebrating three key phrases that define our thriving communities: Growing Young, Stronger Together, and Going Beyond Death to Life.

Growing Young

Embracing life is not limited to any particular age group; it is a concept that transcends generations. We are proud to be a church that nurtures an intergenerational atmosphere, where the wisdom of our elders and the enthusiasm of our youth combine to create a vibrant and dynamic community.

In the teachings of Jesus, we find the encouragement to become like children, embracing a childlike faith that is open, eager, and receptive to God's grace. Our thriving churches have taken this message to heart, fostering an environment that allows every member, regardless of age, to experience spiritual growth and development, to participate in leadership roles, and exude the various elements of the growing young wheel. In doing so, we not only remain young at heart but also enrich each other's lives by sharing diverse perspectives and experiences.

Stronger Together

In unity, we discover strength. Our churches embody the spirit of togetherness, recognizing that we are bound by a shared faith and a common purpose. When we face challenges or trials, we do so as a united body, drawing support from one another, and standing firmly rooted in God's love.

As the Apostle Paul once wrote, "For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ, we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others." (Romans 12:4-5, NIV). This unity allows us to overcome obstacles, reach out to those in need, and fulfill our mission to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world.

Going Beyond Death to Life

In a world that often fixates on the inevitability of death, our church communities boldly choose to focus on the promise of resurrection and life. We are reminded of the words of Jesus when he said, "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die." (John 11:25, NIV). This powerful message resonates within our hearts, filling us with hope and joy.

As a Church and as individual churches, we understand that life is not confined to this earthly existence alone. Our spiritual journey extends beyond the boundaries of mortality, and we find solace in knowing that a greater, eternal life awaits us. By embracing this profound truth, we are empowered to live with purpose, spreading love, compassion, and the Gospel to all corners of the world.

As we continue to journey together as a church that goes beyond death to life, grows young, and stands stronger together, let us celebrate the joy of living in God's grace. We invite you to participate actively and fully in our synod's diverse ministries, outreach programs, and spiritual growth opportunities, as they allow us to deepen our understanding of God's love and make a lasting impact in the lives of others. Remember, the limitations of this world do not define us but rather by the boundless life that Christ offers us. Let us carry this message of hope and transformation into our communities, touching lives, and inspiring others to embrace the abundant life that comes through knowing and following Jesus.

May God bless each one of you abundantly, and may our churches continue to be a beacon of light, love, and life in a world that desperately needs it.

The Reverend Lauren Wolfe Blatt
Director of Communication and Events, NEPS
Pastor at Calvary Lutheran Church, Laureldale
Pastor at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Reading



GROWING YOUNG



GAINING STRENGTH



BEYOND DEATH TO LIFE