

Prints of Peace



I've been looking around a bit at our ministries and our building, and I've been noticing some things that have changed since the COVID pandemic began a little over three years ago. Certainly, there are some things that have taken a hit by the pandemic, most obviously Sunday School and our Youth programming. (Although, to be honest, they were struggling before the pandemic as well, so the blame can't all be laid on COVID.) On-site worship attendance still isn't what it was in 2019, though it is steadily growing over the past few months.

But it's not all bad. I look around and see lots of silver linings to COVID.

We have two large televisions in the Fellowship Hall. These were purchased in 2020 as a way to provide overflow seating for worship. If we exceeded the safe number of worshippers in the sanctuary, others could sit in the Fellowship Hall, where worship would be shared via closed circuit TV. We haven't used the Fellowship Hall for that purpose in some time now, but the televisions are still there, and have been very useful for Bible studies, meetings, funeral luncheons, and other ways. We keep finding new and creative uses for them. We might never have purchased them if it weren't for the pandemic, but they are a blessing.

We record our worship on video every week and share it online via YouTube and through a special "phone-in" service. This started because there was a time when it was unsafe for anyone to gather together for worship, but we are continuing it now. It meets a need for people who are homebound or living far away. Even people on vacation watch our worship videos sometimes. It also makes the decision whether or not to cancel worship due to weather an easier one – it's never fully canceled! We might never have made the investment into this program without the pandemic.

Some of our meetings are still held on Zoom, and some other meetings are "hybrids," where some of the group meets onsite, and a few "zoom in" from home or, in at least two cases, from Florida! Zoom meetings aren't always ideal, but they are far, far better than nothing. This also means that in inclement weather, an important meeting doesn't need to be postponed, but can just pivot to Zoom. We might never have embraced the concept of online meetings if it weren't for the pandemic.

The walkway to our grove, built by Brooks Baker, and paid for in part through synod grant money, was something we'd talked about for years. But it finally became crucial when outdoor worship was our only option for a time. This walkway makes it much easier for many to attend worship and other events in the grove, and it continues to be a blessing to us.

I think that many of us also appreciate "togetherness" more than before, since we had to go without it, or with a very adapted form of it, for so long.

All this doesn't take away from the pain that many endured, the grief and suffering that COVID brought. It affected some of us far more than others, but it affected us all. It was hard, and it will still be some time until we are able to fully move on emotionally from it. But to me these silver linings are a sign of how God works in this world: God does not take suffering away from us, no matter how much we wish God might. Instead, God comes into our suffering, walks with us through it, and brings forth life in the midst of it.

God has gotten us through this, and God will get us through whatever happens next. Praise be God.

Rev. Melly J. Scholtes

Date:	Greeters	Lay Reader	Assisting Minister	Ushers	Power Point and Camera	Acolyte	Offering Counters
June 4	Georgia and John Suranofsky	Mary Hendershot	Sarah Harrison	Sara Godshalk, Sue Reinhart	Antonioli Family	Isabel Baker	Jim Jennings, John Suranofsky
June 11	Traci Rumsey, Connie Itterly	Quincy Miller	Kale Baker	Georgia and John Suranofsky	Cathy Mullen	Landon Horn	Jackie Horn, Brenda Hughes
June 18	Brenda Hughes, Kale Baker	Sarah Harrison	Tina Johns	Vivian Fahr, Traci Rumsey	John Martocci	Alex Scholtes	Jim Jennings, Chip Harrison
June 25	Brooks Baker, Sara Godshalk	Sara Godshalk	Laraine Brands	Connie Itterly, Brenda Hughes	Jim Jennings	Sarah Harrison	Jackie Horn, Tina Johns
July 4	Sherk and June Jones	Isabel Baker	Connie Itterly	Kale Baker, Brooks Baker	Kim Jennings	Isabel Baker	Jim Jennings, Jackie Horn

Communion Assistants:

June 4: Diane Hahn, Connie Itterly

June 11: Tina Johns, Linda Waszmer

June 18: April Miller, Diane Hahn

June 25: Brooks Baker, Tina Johns

July 4: Jim Jennings, April Miller

Altar Guild June: Janet Martocci and Susan Reinhart

Altar Guild July: Carolyn Leidy & Terry Stiso

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.



Weis Grocery Receipts - Thank you to all who save their Weis receipts for Prince of Peace! We received a check for \$266.53. 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*

Thinking of You Cards for Soldiers

Cards need to be in by **June 3rd**.

Place your cards on the Narthex counter.

Questions? See Holly Blakeslee

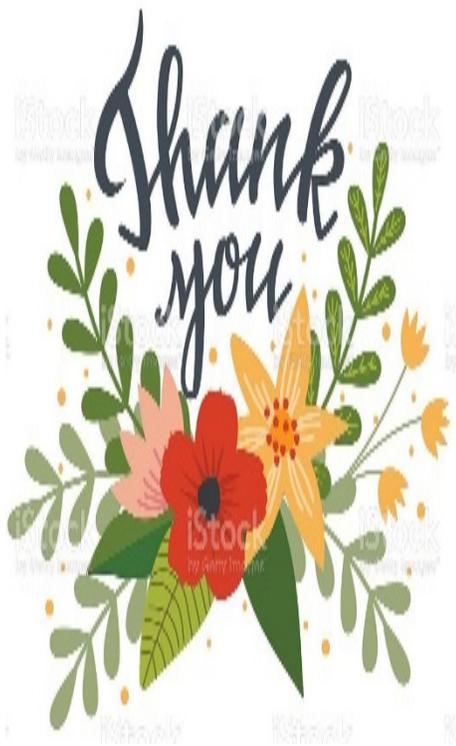




Social Ministry Highlights: The committee decided to collect items for A.W.S.O.M. in Stroudsburg for our next project. This collection will continue until Sunday, June 25th. I received their "wish list", and it's too long to list the items in this article, some of the items in need are: Purina wet dog food; grain free dog treats; cat litter; cat toys; cat food; heavy bowls; dawn dish detergent; sponges; canned pumpkin; and peanut butter. A full list of the items can be found on the bulletin board in the Narthex. The Safe Harbor collection was a great success thanks to your generous donations. Social Ministry thanks you for your continued support of our outreach projects. We welcome your ideas for future projects. If you would like one of the committee members to shop for you, please see: Mary O'Meally, Sherry Hock, and Holly Blakeslee.

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.



Thank you for all the cards, prayers, and heartfelt thoughts sent to me and my family with Rich's passing. Also, a thank you for the ladies who helped in the kitchen and those who made desserts. God bless you all.
--*Sandy Butler and Family*

Thank you all for the beautiful pink plants in the mug planter. It looks lovely on my desk. Thank you also to those who took time to email and call me on Administrative Assistant Day. Your kind and encouraging words meant so much to me and made the day very special! Thanks again! —*Annette Buss*

We would like to thank everyone who sent cards, called, and prayed before, during, and after my operation. This congregation is awesome! We would also like to give a huge thank you to Georgia Suranofsky and Mary O'Meally for cooking and delivering two wonderful meals and to the Pastor for his phone calls and visit. It lifted my spirits for sure. I hope everyone knows how much your acts of kindness and friendship is appreciated. —*The Stanas*

Thank you to everyone for everything you've done for us. We really appreciate what you are doing for us! —*Wayne and Carol Shuman*

Graduate Recognition will be held on Sunday, June 11: We would like the names of anyone graduating from any level of education, such as nursery school, kindergarten, high school, college, technical school, graduate school etc. Please place the information on the sign-up sheet in the narthex or email info to poplcbangor@gmail.com or 610-588-2355. **Information needed:** Graduate's full name, telephone number, major, institution they are graduating from, diploma/degree completed, future plans, and name of person who is providing the information. **We need to have all the names and information absolutely no later than: Wednesday, May 31st.**





LEHIGH VALLEY FOSTER CARE

As you may remember, on May 7th Maria Samaritano gave a temple talk on the Foster Care System in the Lehigh Valley. She went on to tell us how overworked and stressed the case workers are. Georgia Suranofsky suggested we make up a gift basket for them. I found out there are 78 case workers, so we are going to need a very large basket filled with goodies. I know we can fill it because we are a generous and giving congregation. For the month of June, we would like to collect the following items: granola bars, cookies, tea bags, coffee, hard candy, and post it notes. While shopping please consider purchasing one of these items, there will be a basket in the Narthex for your donations. If you would like me or Georgia to shop for you, please let us know. Thank you, *Mary O'Meally*

WE NEED YOUR DONATIONS:

POP's Treasures did very well when we opened on May 5 & 6, however, we need your "treasures" to replenish our inventory, and to keep the customers returning. You may bring your donations to church on Sunday or call Mary O'Meally or Jackie Horn to schedule a drop-off.

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

June 9 & 10; July 7 & 8; August 11 & 12; 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.

Thank you for your willingness to help! Questions? Contact Mary O'Meally 610-708-0003 or Jackie Horn 610-810-7268



FATHER'S DAY is just around the corner (June 18th)

Would you like to remember/honor your Father and/ or Men who are special to you by listing their name in our announcement folder, on the bulletin board and in the July Newsletter? A blue sign-up sheet is on the counter in the Narthex. Suggested donation: \$1 per name benefits the Sunday School. **Names must be given to Annette Buss by June 12th to be included. (If you are unable to sign-up in person... please email the names to poplcbangor@gmail.com, mail this form to 2445 Lake Minsi Drive, Bangor, PA 18013 or call Annette at 610-588-2355).**

IN HONOR OF: _____

IN MEMORY OF: _____

BY: _____

Use extra paper if more space is needed.



Thursday, June 1	Psalm 8; Job 38:1-11; 2 Timothy 1:8-12a
Friday, June 2	Psalm 8; Job 38:12-21; 2 Timothy 1:12b-14
Saturday, June 3	Psalm 8; Job 38:22-38; John 14:15-17
The Holy Trinity (6/4)	Genesis 1:1 – 2:4a; Psalm 8; 2 Corinthians 13:1-13; Matthew 28:16-20
Monday, June 5	Psalm 29; Job 38:39-39:12; 1 Corinthians 12:1-3
Tuesday, June 6	Psalm 29; Job 39:13-25; 1 Corinthians 12:4-13
Wednesday, June 7	Psalm 29; Job 39:26-40:5; John 14:25-26
Thursday, June 8	Psalm 50:7-15; Lamentations 1:7-11; 2 Peter 2:17-22
Friday, June 9	Psalm 50:7-15; Lamentations 3:40-58; Acts 28:1-10
Saturday, June 10	Psalm 50:7-15; Exodus 34:1-9; Matthew 9:27-34
Sunday, June 11	Hosea 5:15 – 6:6; Psalm 50:7-15; Romans 4:13-25; Matthew 9:9-13, 18-26
Monday, June 12	Psalm 40:1-8 ; Leviticus 15:25-31; 22:1-9; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:2
Tuesday, June 13	Psalm 40:1-8; Hosea 8:11-14; 10:1-2; Hebrews 13:1-16
Wednesday, June 14	Psalm 40:1-8; Hosea 14:1-9; Matthew 12:1-8
Thursday, June 15	Psalm 100; Exodus 4:18-23; Hebrews 3:1-6
Friday, June 16	Psalm 100; Exodus 4:27-31; Acts 7:35-43
Saturday, June 17	Psalm 100; Exodus 6:28-7:13; Mark 7:1-13
Sunday, June 18	Exodus 19:2-8a; Psalm 100; Romans 5:1-8; Matthew 9:35 – 10:8
Monday, June 19	Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45; Joshua 1:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5
Tuesday, June 20	Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45; 1 Samuel 3:1-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5
Wednesday, June 21	Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45; Proverbs 4:10-27; Luke 6:12-19
Thursday, June 22	Psalm 69:7-10, 16-18; Jeremiah 18:12-17; Hebrews 2:5-9
Friday, June 23	Psalm 69:7-10, 16-18; Jeremiah 18:18-23; Acts 5:17-26
Saturday, June 24	Psalm 69:7-10, 16-18; Jeremiah 20:1-6; Luke 11:53-12:3
Sunday, June 25	Jeremiah 20:7-13; Psalm 69:7-10, 16-18; Romans 6:1b-11; Matthew 10:24-39
Monday, June 26	Psalm 6; Micah 7:1-7; Revelation 2:1-7
Tuesday, June 27	Psalm 6; Jeremiah 26:1-12; Revelation 2:8-11
Wednesday, June 28	Psalm 6; Jeremiah 38:1-13; Matthew 10:5-23
Thursday, June 29	Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18; Jeremiah 25:1-7; Galatians 5:2-6
Friday, June 30	Psalm 89:1-4, 15-18; Jeremiah 25:8-14; Luke 17:1-4

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!



*In Honor of
and In Memory of
Mothers and
Special Ladies...*

*The following individuals have made a contribution to the Sunday School.
In Loving Honor of...*

- Connie Comunale
by Justine, Marc, Jeffrey and Eric
- Kathleen Ott
by Larry and Lisa Ott
- Lisa Ott
by Cheyenne, Montana, Alli, Justin
and Maegan
- Sue Flyte
by Ray and Tara Flyte
- Tara Flyte
by Tyler, Ashley and Lauren
- Laraine Brands
by The Family of Laraine Brands
- Betty DeVito
by Mary A. Hendershot
- Theresa Suranofsky
by Georgia Suranofsky
- Jean Reinhart
by Sue and Rich Reinhart
- Jackie Horn
by Brooks and Janessa Baker
- Georgia Suranofsky
by Brooks and Janessa Baker
- Jennifer Baker
by Isabel and Sadie Baker
- Georgia Suranofsky
by Kale and Jen Baker
- Kay Lawler
by The Hughes Family
- Diane Hahn
by Renee and Earl
- Mary Hughes
by Aria and Eli
- Shirley Smith
by Carol and Carson
- My Mom, Pat Koller
by Tina Johns
- All the Moms in My Life
by Tina Johns

**For All the Times you Gently
Picked Me Up**

*For all the times you gently picked me up,
When I fell down,
For all the times you tied my shoes
And tucked me into bed,
Or needed something
But put me first instead.
For everything we shared,
The dreams, the laughter,
And the tears,
I love you with a Special Love
That deepens every year.
Thank You Mom!
- Unknown*



You Are a Beautiful Person

*You are graceful like a butterfly...
You affect not only our lives but others too...
You always help where it is needed and show you really care...
You realize that happiness brings happiness...
You have a kind and gentle love that goes a long, long way...
You are a true treasure to behold even tho you do not realize it...
You are everything contentment is made of...
You are everything friends are supposed to be...
You show your many beautiful colors day by day...
You touch lives and you are appreciated...
You share everything yet ask nothing in return...
Thank you for being the beautiful person you are...*

In Loving Memory of...

Helen Lane, Hazel Weidman, Dorothy Lane,
Ruth Lane and Irene Weaver
by Kathy A. Lane
Ruth Hearn
by Justine, Marc, Jeffrey and Eric
Joann Saviet
by Rob, Lily and Daniel
Betty Leininger
by Her Daughters, Louise, Jane and Carolyn
Shirley Pensyl
by The Family of Shirley Pensyl
Joan Miller
by Sherry, Carissa, D.J. Staci, Josh, Maci, Mia, and
Freddy
Christina DeSalva
by Mary O'Meally
Greta Johnson
by Karen Karner
Brenda Smith
by Ray and Tara Flyte
Frances Fontanella
by Ray and Tara Flyte
Alice DeVito
by Betty DeVito
Viola Fraunfelter
by Betty DeVito
Wanda Riley
by Georgia Suranofsky
Stella Steinmetz
by John and Janet Martocci
Nora Martocci
by John and Janet Martocci
Esther Godshalk
by Sue and Rich Reinhart
Joyce Comunale
by Diane Hahn
Dorothy Rambo
by Mar Stana
Ann Stana
by Mar Stana
Marian Parsons Saddler
by June and Sherk Jones
Esther Hahn Jones
by Sherk and June Jones

Missing you...

*Just a thought of sweet remembrance,
Just a memory sad and true,
Just the love and sweet
devotion of the one's who think of you...*

In Loving Memory of...

Betty Moysey Godshalk
by Sara and Bill Godshalk
Alta Hartzell Moysey
by Sara and Bill Godshalk
Madeline Klinzing Godshalk
by Sara and Bill Godshalk
Sherma LaBarre Godshalk
by Sara and Bill Godshalk
Grace Thompson
by Carolyn Leidy and Daughters
Joyce Comunale
by The Hughes Family
Jennie Widenor
by Neil and Janet Pearson
Pauline Pearson
by Neil and Janet Pearson
Olive Gates
by Doris Thomas
Pearl Comunale
by Justine, Marc, Jeffrey and Eric
Frances Poliskiewicz
by Phyllis and Walter Patterson
and grand children
Evelyn Emes
by Carol and Carson
Flora Wilson
by Carol and Carson
Edna Smith, Bessie Bartholomew and
Nellie Smith
by Annette Buss



Gone From Us

*Gone from us that smiling face,
The cheerful pleasant ways,
The heart that won so many friends,
In bygone, happy days.
A life made beautiful by kindly deeds,
A helping hand for others' needs.
To a beautiful life,
Comes a happy end,
She died as she lived,
Everyone's friend.*

- Unknown



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

Judy Rotzell, June 1
Gordon Brozina, June 2
Maverick Baggitt, June 2
Cory Jennings, June 3
Brooks Baker, June 5
Tina Johns, June 6
Joanne Robinson, June 7
Diane Searfass, June 10
Joyce Minisi, June 13
Chip Harrison, June 15
Heather Scholtes, June 15
Richard Kessler, June 19
Jeremy Smith, June 21
Marion Messinger, June 21
John Martocci, June 22
Matthew Dotta, June 22
Holly Blakeslee, June 23
Magdalein Streisguth, June 23
Christopher Brands, June 24
Jarrett Ott, June 25
Kathy Lane, June 25
George Brown, June 28
Patricia Heard, June 28
Katie Waszmer, June 29

May Key Council Highlights:

1. May 28th Special Pentecost Service
2. Rummage and Boutique sales were a success
3. New insurance carrier, will provide better coverage at a lower cost

On-site (9:45 on Sundays)

Weather permitting, we will worship *outside* in our grove on the first Sunday of each month from June 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.

WORSHIP & MUSIC UPDATES

The Worship and Music Committee is dedicated to helping you worship more fully each week. To that end, we've made a few subtle changes in worship recently.

1. First, the **communion cup table** has been moved. Communion still operates the same way, but now the table is parallel to the altar, looking more like a "low altar," as found in some church buildings. The empty cups are now in metal trays instead of directly on the table. This hopefully provides a slightly more "worshipful" feel to communion.
2. The **offering plate** has been moved. Since the pandemic, we had the offering plate in the narthex instead of passing it around. We decided to keep it that way even after restrictions ended. We have heard that there are some people who miss passing the offering plate, that it doesn't feel as worshipful to have the plate in the narthex. There are also others who find it *more* worshipful *not* to have the plate passed. So we have tried to find a middle ground; the offering plate is now in the worship space, in the back near the font. You are still invited to place your offering there as you come in.
3. We know that for many, **worshiping outside in the grove** is particularly special. So, weather permitting, we will do that the first Sunday of each month this year, from June through September. **The first outdoor service will be June 4!**

GENEROSITY IS ALL AROUND US!

WOW! We filled the big Generosity Jar with 71 notes collected from the jars returned by members on Sunday April 30th. Kermit, Polly and POP, our Prince of Peace loveable puppets were with us and engaging as several stories were read during the children’s story time. We encourage you to keep your eyes and ears open for the many expressions of generosity. It can be monetary, a gift, hospitality, volunteering, or emotional/relational support.



Stop by the bulletin board by the fellowship hall to read the notes. Feel free to return your jar and notes on any Sunday. If you watch the service online or listen to it on your phone, you can hear about generosity too!

THE GENEROSITY CONTINUES...

The boxes loaded in the car with quilting supplies are going to St. Peter’s Lutheran Church in Plainfield for their quilters.

For years our quilters brought comfort and joy to many with the quilts and lap quilts that were made. They were so generous with their time and talents. As the materials are passed on, we pray that the generosity with continue to bless others.



The last Sunday of the month is now, “Generosity Sunday”! We know that the last Sunday of the month is when we share with donations to “Joyful Noise”. When you return your jar with notes about how generosity was lived out for you in the month, bring your coin or cash donation to extend your generosity to others.

Remember, you can either email your stories to **POP generosity @outlook.com** or post them on our Facebook page. If you would like your own jar, call Georgia at 610-703-0638 and she will be happy to drop one off for you. We want to include everyone on site or at home.

Keep on looking for expressions of generosity!

We are thankful and filled with gratitude in June for...

Employment



Engineers and architects



Homes



Tree workers and landscapers





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
 • **Minister of Music: Martin Yazdzik**
 • **Bookkeeper: Joyce Weishaupt**
 • **Financial Secretary: Mary O’Meally**
 • **Custodian: Brittnee Evans**
 • **Parish Nurse: Justine Cesari, 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!

July 2023 Newsletter is:

Tuesday, June 13th 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.

Graceful Generosity

Published to help you grow as a steward of God's grace.

Worshipping God through Giving

We worship God through our worship services as we pray, sing, and give him praise. We can live lives that give him honor and glory; however, in some ways, the money that we give to God is one of the most special ways that we can worship him. It is difficult to give money because there are many things that can be purchased with our money to make our lives easier and more comfortable. The giving of our money is a testimony of our praise and gratitude to God. Is there anything more worshipful than honoring God with our money?

Testing your Knowledge of Scripture

What parable could the following picture refer to?



If you said the Parable of the Two Builders, you were right. *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on a rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the*

winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash” (Matthew 7:24-27).

The wise builder selects a site on a rock. Then he will not need to worry about heavy rains or strong winds. A house built upon rock has a foundation that lasts. A foolish builder constructs his house as though he is pitching a tent.

Through this parable, Jesus is telling us that a person who hears his words and puts them into practice is like the wise builder. It is foolish to hear the words of Jesus and not obey them. Such a person may be compared to a builder who builds his house on the sand without a foundation. Jesus wants us to hear his words and obey them.

The Pump Needs to be Primed

If you've ever been on a farm, you may be familiar with old-fashioned water pumps. When pumps have been out of use for a time, they can often be pumped fruitlessly. The problem can be solved by priming the pump with water, which expands the cork, bringing up water, rather than just air.

Life can be compared to that pump. In order to receive, one may need to give first. We have to put something into life to get something out of it. Paul stated this principle in Galatians 6:7: *“A man reaps what he sows.”* Rewards and successes in life are earned; they result from hard work and time.

This principle of priming the pump, of sowing and reaping, applies to our giving as well. It is true that God provides for all. Jesus himself said, *“He [God] causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous”* (Matthew 5:45). However, he also promised a special blessing on those who are generous in their giving: *“A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes*

others will himself be refreshed” (Proverbs 11:25).

As redeemed children of God, our main motivation for giving is our desire to respond with grateful hearts to him for his marvelous gifts to us, especially the gift of his Son, Jesus, who brought us forgiveness of sins and life eternal. We will desire to give, not for reward, but to honor him with our lives and our time, our talents and our treasures. We will find that we cannot out-give God. Speaking through the prophet Malachi, God challenged, “*Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,’ says the Lord Almighty, ‘and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it’*” (Malachi 3:10). Accept God’s challenge: put him to the test. Prime the pump.

Your Final Message

Most people want to put off thinking about and preparing for the time when the Lord will take them to his eternal home. You should be prepared because only God knows each person’s timetable. Whether you are given a short or long life, you can have a final opportunity, through a will or trust, to share a message of your love for Christ and a gift to continue your faithful stewardship.

Your last will and testament can proclaim your love of the Lord and provide an encouragement to your families and friends to grow in their faith. Through a Christian Preamble, which is the way you can begin a will or trust, you have your last opportunity to witness to your loved ones.

If your will or trust gives a final testimony of your trust in the Lord, it will be a real source of encouragement to those you leave behind. It will comfort your family and friends to know that you believed and trusted in the promise that Jesus gave in John 11:25-26, “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me*

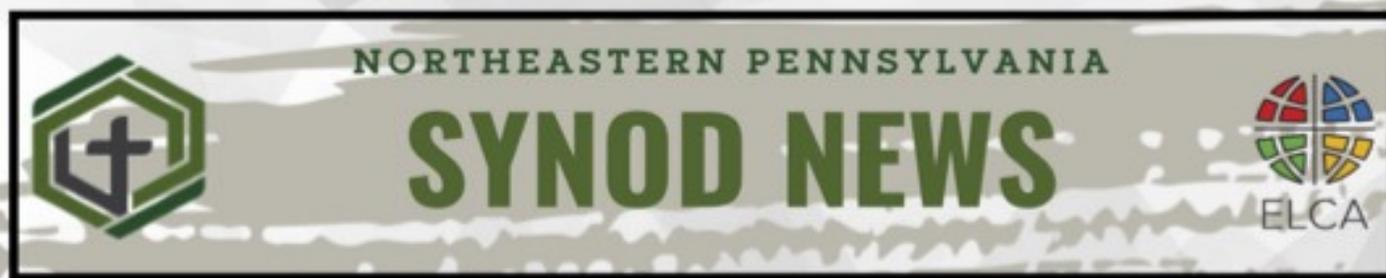
will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. If your Christian preamble is in a will, your message will go beyond your family and friends, because a will is filed in probate court which is public record.



A will or trust is also a wonderful time to put your love for the Lord into action with a gift for the Lord’s work through your church. For many Christians, this may be the biggest gift they make. A bequest in your will gives the message of Christ’s importance to you. A gift for the Lord’s work acknowledges God’s ownership of your life and things and that you are simply returning them to God who provided them for your use. As J. Gregory Pope said, “Planning an enduring gift that supports and perpetuates the Gospel message is a significant ... sometimes final ... witness of a faithful and maturing disciple in response to the grace of a loving God.”

May God grant us all an abundant measure of his grace so our final messages will bring glory to him.

Blessings on Your Stewardship Journey!



WE MATTER TO THE WHOLE CHURCH: A STORY FROM OUR SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD

Being a member of a congregation council is significant in the life of a disciple. Serving as a leader in a congregation is rewarding, terrifying, awe-inspiring and messy. You are among friends, family and your community of believers, and are chosen to lead in your congregation. It's just a few times a month, but as Barbara Nugent, a synod vice president, shares, "Then life happens, and you find out the reporting required. Situations occur; personalities clash; decisions need to be made. Who do you go to for direction?"

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod provided that direction in February when it offered training to 70 congregational lay leaders that strengthened each person's skills and faith. From evangelism to the ELCA constitution and bylaws, they gathered to meet the passions and needs, offering workshops with special breakouts for presidents, vice presidents, secretaries and treasurers that covered such topics as worship and music, communications, advocacy, stewardship and social justice/anti-racism. The day started with Bishop Kurt Kusserow encouraging these valued leaders to keep the focus on our purpose:

“Your leadership in the life of your congregation ought always to bear in mind that your congregation finds its fulfillment in the universal church, and that the universal church exists in and through congregations such as yours. I think this means addressing local questions and concerns in the life of your congregation as if they matter to the whole church (because they do).”

Everyone was hungry to gather ideas, consider future steps but also have an opportunity to connect, be empowered, feel valued and cared for and remember the excitement of being church. Rev. Melissa Stoller, director for evangelical mission, said it this way: “The day was a very visible yet not necessarily quantifiable force that we are church together. Wandering but not alone. Feeling worry, power, uncertainty, and joy as one.” Central to this gathering was living into the mission of this synod “to serve, connect and equip congregations of the SWPA synod to tell the story of Jesus.” Everyone knew that the synod was there for the congregations with staff, volunteers and greater church support, not only this day but in the days to come, and synod staff are supported through the generous mission support of congregations allowing them to be there for our leaders. One leading Scripture for the day reminded each leader of their value: “Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word” (Acts 6:3-4). Hoping each of our synods are seeking ways that work for them to encourage and empower congregational leaders. Knowing that we are church together, church that supports each other across the whole church prayerfully, financially, emotionally and with a hope for renewal.



Our Synod has PRIDE



June is Pride Month which celebrates LGBTQIA+ folx and their many achievements.

Although injustices and prejudices still exist within our society, we have made great strides since the Stonewall Riots in 1969, attaining marriage equality. However, as previously mentioned, we still have a long way to go in the struggle for equal rights. By learning about LGBTQ Pride/History Month, congregational members are more likely to have an understanding and acceptance for all individuals, no matter what they look like, what gender they do or don't identify as, and who they love. Consider celebrating **PRIDE** in your congregation!