

Prints of Peace



July 2026

Volume 31 Issue 7

The 2026 Assembly of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod was held in early June. I've attended over thirty synod assemblies in my life, but this was without a doubt the most powerful and intense assembly I've ever experienced.

I started the assembly very nervous. As the chair of the synod's Election Committee, it was my job to oversee the election of a bishop at this assembly – and this was far more complex than any other election I'd led before. And on top of that, I expected to be one of the nominees for bishop, which meant that I had to back down from the committee once the assembly started. I had to trust in the rest of my committee, and all the volunteer ballot-counters. And I had to trust that I'd provided all they needed. That was not easy!

I was indeed nominated for bishop. In fact, I reached the third ballot, when the field was narrowed to seven nominees. I had the opportunity to give a three-minute speech to the whole assembly, sharing who I was and what was important to me. (It may not surprise anyone at Prince of Peace that I spoke about my experience with depression, and how that affects my understanding of God and of the church.) I also had the opportunity to meet with more than three hundred voting members of the Assembly, in groups, and answer their questions. As I pondered what it would be like to serve as the spiritual leader of the 230 congregations of our synod, I grew both excited and terrified. I was greatly relieved when the results of the third ballot were announced – I was no longer in the running. And I was excited again, and very hopeful, when our new Bishop-Elect, Rev. Jennifer Dee, was eventually elected.

When I look back at that weekend, filled with so many emotions, I realize with great comfort that I was never alone there. I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit all around me, and I also felt the presence of so many people praying and standing with me. Some of those people were colleagues, pastors and other synod staff and volunteers I've known for years. But it's remarkable how many of those people were Prince of Peace members.

I found comfort knowing that all the ballots were being counted with care, because I knew that among the counters were **Georgia Suranofsky**, **John Suranofsky**, and **Brenda Stauffer**. I found comfort during my time as a nominee because each of the seven nominees was assigned a prayer partner (mine was Deacon Deborah Graf from Reading). This prayer partner ministry was carefully overseen by a member of the Elections Committee, **Jim Jennings**. And another of the prayer partners was **Minister Tina Johns**. These prayer partners walked with us and provided peace. And one of the greatest sources of comfort was **Kale Baker**, who kept me laughing throughout the whole assembly, and kept me grounded.

It was so powerful to be surrounded by so many members of this congregation I love. Prince of Peace truly is a cloud of witnesses, and I am blessed to be among you.

In Christ,

Pastor Scholtes

Northeastern PA Synod Assembly Update from Tina Johns



On June 4-6, Kale Baker and I had the pleasure to attend the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod assembly to elect a new bishop. On Thursday Kale and I volunteered to help get people checked in and registered.

As the assembly began, the Rev. CeCee Mills, secretary of the ELCA, was our guide through the bishop election process. After the first vote, one of the presentations honored Georgia Suranofsky for her ten years as a storyteller with the mission interpreters. We had many displays from our partners to explore, in an area called the Imagination Station.

The results of the first ballot were announced, and all names needed to be contacted, to see if they would accept the nomination. On Friday morning, we started voting off with eleven nominees that accepted, one of which was our own Pastor Scholtes.

Rev. Mills spoke on the ELCA, its mission and outreach. Thanks to gifts from congregations like us, \$354,326 in gifts were made to world hunger. We viewed a video presentation from ELCA Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry. We approved the 2027 budget and the recommended compensation guidelines for pastors, LLM's, and others. Synod Council candidates were voted in. The results from the second ballot for bishop were announced, and the top seven (including Pastor Scholtes) would move to the third ballot.

We participated in a healing service, blessing and healing each other around our tables. I then took on the assignment of being a prayer partner with one of the seven candidates. Our job was to pray with our candidate, keep them on schedule, be their support and guidance through the next steps. This was such a humbling experience, getting to know all the candidates, and being part of their journey.

We had Q&A with each of the seven nominees and went into a caucus to discuss thoughts and questions. The third ballot was taken. We reviewed and approved constitutional amendments. Rev. Dr Guy Erwin, president of the United Lutheran seminary made a presentation.

On Saturday morning, we took the fourth ballot, with three remaining candidates. There were presentations and panel discussions from 6261 and other synod programs. We had a beautiful service, sharing the word and sacrament.

After lunch, some last remarks were made from our final two nominees before the final vote. I was a prayer partner right up to the last vote. Words cannot describe how powerful and emotional it was to be on this journey with these extraordinary people.

We heard reports from our companion synods and global refuge program, handled the last bits of the agenda, and waited for the final word from the counting team.

Finally, the announcement came of our new bishop-elect, Jennifer Dee. I personally look forward to having opportunities to work with our new bishop-elect. For me this was an emotional assembly, not just witnessing the election of the first female bishop in our synod, but that I was blessed to volunteer, share my talents, my faith, prayers, and making new relationships and be part of such amazing leadership.

EPHESIANS 3:20-21

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Happy Birthday

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

April Miller
Jennifer Baker
Ruth Hinton
John Suranofsky
Benjamin Scholtes
Brenda Stauffer
Connie Silvius
Edna Antonucci
Sara Godshalk
Phyllis Campbell
Mason Schaarschmidt
Walter Stana
Jacqueline Horn
Alexandra Summy
William Waszmer

Join us . . .

Worship with us on-site at 9:45 a.m. on Sundays

Online / Facebook

Watch our worship each week at our website (popbangor.org/video-worship). Or watch it on our Facebook page (facebook.com/popbangor).

Outdoor Worship

The Worship and Music Committee has scheduled worship in our grove every other week in the summer! Weather permitting, we will worship in the grove June 28; July 12 & 26; August 9 & 23; and September 6. In case of inclement weather, we will hold worship inside that day.



Key Council Highlights: June 8, 2026 Meeting

1. We will welcome new members into the Church on Sunday, June 14: Beresford & Natasha Edwards, Savannah Schaarschmidt & James Gerlach and Ingrid Levisay
2. Warming/Cooling center guidelines were reviewed
3. Watch for upcoming information regarding the naming of the grove
4. Stone will be added to the grove and the entrance island

Endowment News

REMINDER: Council is now accepting ideas for new sub accounts for 2027. The ideas received will be reviewed, considered, and council will make their recommendations at the Annual Meeting. Please contact a council member by August 1st for the form to submit your idea.

The first disbursement from the “Let’s Try It” sub fund for \$250 was given to the “Free to Be” ministry. Pastor Lauren Applegate shared with us about the work of the ministry on May 24, 2026. If you have an idea about a new way to grow our evangelism ministry, please let a council member know.



DID YOU KNOW?.....Year to date releases from sub funds total \$50,445.15



July Altar Guild: Carolyn Leidy, Terry Stiso **August Altar Guild:** Cathy Mullen, Phyllis Bisher

	July 5	July 12	July 19	July 26	August 2
Greeters	Sue Reinhart, Kale Baker	Justine Saviet, Dave Karner	Tina Johns, Holly Blakeslee	Sherk and June Jones	Lisa and Wayne Jones
Lay Readers	Sherry Hock	Isabel Baker	Quincy Miller	Sara Godshalk	April Miller
Assisting Ministers	Tina Johns	Laraine Brands	Connie Itterly	April Miller	Alex Scholtes
Com. Assts.	Brooks Baker, Tina Johns	Alex Scholtes, Jim Jennings	April Miller, Tina Johns	Marlene Stana, Tina Johns	Laraine Brands, Tina Smith
Ushers	Georgia and John Suranofsky	Tina Johns, Traci Rumsey	Brenda Hughes, Sue Reinhart	Kale Baker, Brooks Baker	Sara Godshalk, Sadie Baker
Power Point Camera	Jim Jennings	Antonioli Family	Kim Jennings	Tara Flyte	Cathy Mullen
Acolytes	Taylor Baker	Landon Horn	Alex Scholtes	Ben Scholtes	Fabian Vargas
Offering Counters	Mary O'Meally	Tina Johns	Connie Itterly	Jean Janosa	John Suranofsky
Pew Tenders	June Jones	Traci Rumsey	Sherry and Maci Hock	Rhonda Montgomery	Sara Godshalk
Bread Baker	Alex Summy		Brenda Hughes		Cathy Mullen

Would you like to join the volunteer team? Contact the church office at 610-588-2355.

If you are unable to fulfill your assignment, please find a replacement and let Pastor Scholtes know of the change.

Real Readers: Join Us! We meet at 2 p.m. the 1st Thursday of each month...

- July 2 – “Clear” by Carys Davies (Karen)
- August 6 – “My Friends” by Fredrik Backman (Cheryl)
- September 3 – “The Paper Palace” by Miranda Heller (Terry)
- October 1 – “Broken Country” by Clare Leslie Hall (Patti)
- November 5 – “The Secret of Secrets” by Dan Brown (Cindy)
- December 3 – “Atmosphere” by Taylor Reid (Janet)



ALL ARE WELCOME!

Church Picnic!



Save the Date and Join us for a Church Picnic:

Sunday, August 9, 2026 after service, in the GROVE, weather permitting. Food, fun, fellowship, and activities for the kids. Bring a chair and a dish to share. A sign-up sheet is on the Narthex counter.

Questions? See Tina Johns.

How can I make a difference at Prince of Peace?

There are so many ways you can volunteer here at Prince of Peace and support our ministries. There are brightly colored index cards on the counter in the Narthex for you to take and fill out. I realize that not every volunteer opportunity is listed on the front side of the card but feel free to turn the card over and add anything that may have been missed. Once completed, you can give to me on Sunday mornings.

It's not too early to think about the Jacktown events on July 17-19th (sign-up sheets are in the Narthex) and October 17 & 18. The Blue Valley Farm Show will be held on August 11-15th. Please prayerfully consider spending some time to help in this important ministry here at Prince of Peace.

As always please feel free to reach out to me with any questions you may have.

—April Miller, Volunteer Coordinator



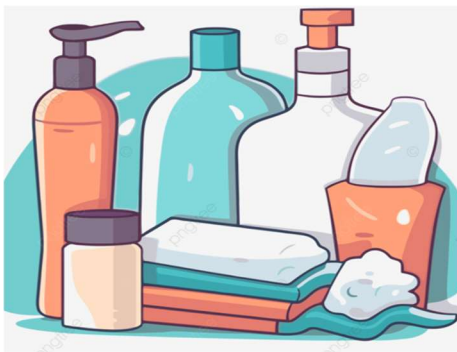
Join us for Faith by Firelight

Faith by Firelight will be held in the grove on the following dates: June 27th, July 25, August 22, September 26, and October 24. We will begin around 6:30 p.m. Hot dogs and s'mores will be provided. Feel free to bring your own beverage and a snack to share. In case of inclement weather or fire ban we will cancel. Questions? See Connie Itterly or Scott Schipps.

P.U.M.P Special Request Update:

P.U.M.P. requests peanut butter, cereal, and any kind of pasta. As always, staples are always appreciated too.

Please note: P.U.M.P. cannot use 18 count egg cartons only dozen count cartons. Thank you!



Social Ministry Project Update:

As I write this, I'm sad to report that the dog food/treats project was not successful.

Anyway, our next project, July thru September is for P.U.M.P. They are in desperate need of the following items: deodorant, razors, shaving cream, Q-tips, band-aids, liquid/bar soap, toothbrushes/toothpaste, shampoo, feminine hygiene products, etc. As always, if you would like a member of social ministry to shop for you, we'll be happy to do so. Members: Mary O'Meally, Sherry Hock and Holly Blakeslee.



POP'S Treasures:

*Come, Shop,
Donate*

Our next sale will be on July 10th (10 a.m. -2 p.m.) and the 11th (9 a.m. -Noon) with drops on July 13th and 20th, (1-2 p.m. and 6-7 p.m.)

—Jackie Horn

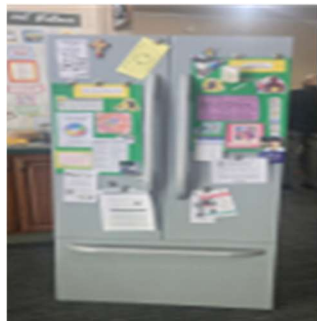


Prince of Peace Cookbook—Share Your Recipes

Do you have a favorite recipe that you want to share with the members of Prince of Peace? We are collecting recipes and preparing to publish our church cookbook. It's easy to submit online by going to www.typensave.com and click "login". Our username is [POPbangorpa](http://www.typensave.com) and the password is [custard369](http://www.typensave.com) and click submit and begin to follow the prompts. Any questions feel free to contact April Miller, Brenda Hughes or Justine Saviet. **We have set a deadline of July 1st** to give us time to proof the recipes and prepare the book for printing. We hope to have the book available at the end of September or early October—just in time for your Christmas shopping. Since the cost is driven by the amount of recipes (thickness of the book) we anticipate the cost to be between \$15 and \$18 per book. Once we know how many recipes, we have we will be able to determine the selling price.

Stewardship News

“God’s Refrigerator “Door”



Have you seen all the information from the Health and Wellness Committee on God’s Refrigerator Door? WOW! It was very helpful to see all they do. Thanks for sharing! *You are important to us!*

Being a Steward to Volunteer for Faith Formation of Children

Hi my name is Brittany Walters. I have been a member of Prince of Peace for about 3 years now. When I first came to this church, I wasn't sure where I could fit in. I decided to join the Faith Exploration team and signed up to help teach the little kids Sunday school class. It eventually led to becoming the head teacher every Sunday for that class. I love being able to teach the children what I know about the Bible, and we all learn new things together. I like to make learning about the Bible fun and interesting. Every week I try to plan my lessons with a fun game or craft or activity that goes along with the story for that week. Being involved with the children of our church means a lot to me because when I was growing up Church was a big part of my life. I can remember going to Sunday school every Sunday. Going to VBS, the Christmas pageants we put on for our congregation, and all the fun we had. I wanted to be able to share my experiences with not only my children but the children of the wonderful congregation that I now call my family. Thank you for all the support you have shown to the Sunday School program we truly appreciate it.

Joyful Noise Good News!

Collection for May totaled \$100.00!

Your giving in 2026 through May totals \$527.00!

Thank you for your continued generosity!

Join in the Fun...

Bless Our Mess VBS is geared to ages 4-11. It will be held on five consecutive Wednesday evenings through July 8 from 6 p.m.-8 p.m. (Dinner is optional from 5:30 – 6 p.m.) Registration forms can be found on the counter in the church Narthex or email the church office at poplcbangor@gmail.com. Questions can be directed to Tina Johns, Kim Jennings, or Brittany Walters.



Let’s make art together this Summer at Prince of Peace!

Bring the art materials you wish to use (paints, paper, glue, brushes, rocks, stencils, cards, etc.) We’ll meet in the Fellowship Hall for 2 weeks, on July 23 and 30, from 9:30-12:00. We can share ideas and materials with each other. Beginners are welcome. Everyone is an artist! Any questions, please contact Karen Karner or Lynn Rideout.

New Members and Directory Changes

Louise Brown (new address)
284 N Walnut St. #106, Bath, PA 18014

Beresford & Natasha Edwards
(new members)
1248 Creek Rd.
Bangor, PA 18013

Ingrid Levisay (new member)
2701 Auburn Ave.
Palmer, PA 18045

Savannah Schaarschmidt & James Gerlach
(new members)
260 Taft St.
Wind Gap, PA 18091



New Member Bios

Natasha & Beresford Edwards: Hello, I would like to take a moment to introduce myself and my husband. My name is Natasha Edwards and my husband's name is Beresford Edwards. We are happy to be new members to the church. We found the church through a fellow member who had invited us to attend, thank you Mary O'Meally. We came to a service and fell in love with the church. Immediately we noticed how welcoming everybody was to us, and we've been coming ever since. We had the pleasure to recently get our son baptized by Pastor Scholtes. We are happy to be members now and are looking forward to growing a better connection with our new church family.

Savannah Schaarschmidt & James Gerlach: We are Savannah and James, and we are grateful for the many blessings God has given our family. Together, we have three beautiful children, ages 12, 7, and 18 months. Family is at the center of everything we do, and we strive to build a home filled with love, faith, kindness, and support for one another. Life is busy and full of adventures with children at different stages of life, but we are grateful for the joy and lessons they bring each day. We are thankful for the opportunity to be part of this church family and look forward to growing in our faith, serving others, and building meaningful relationships within the congregation. From finding a little church to get our boys baptized to feeling so welcomed in the short time of attending Prince of Peace. We are excited to see how God continues to work in our lives and in the life of our family.



Let's Try It!

Recently, we welcomed Rev. Lauren Applegate from "Free to Be" to Prince of Peace. We presented her with a check for \$250 as a donation to Free to Be, and I explained that this money came from a new Endowment Sub Fund at Prince of Peace, called "**Let's Try It!**"

What's a Sub Fund?

Each year, we receive a disbursement from our Endowment Fund (5% of the principal, plus a percentage of anything added in the previous year), which we put into "buckets" that we call sub funds. At our annual meeting in November each year, we vote on the sub funds that we will have in the coming year. This year's sub funds include Helpers' Helpers; Congregational Education; Outdoor Enhancements; Technology; Unbudgeted Property Expenses; and "Let's Try It!"

What's the "Let's Try It!" sub fund for?

We are a welcoming congregation, once people get to our doors. Our congregation does lots of outreach, but **evangelism** is a growth area for us. The purpose of this sub fund is to encourage and inspire the congregation to **invite** people from the community to join us in our praise of and service to God. We seek and serve Christ in all people – how can we encourage and inspire others to join us in doing that? The world is a very different place than when many of us grew up. We're going to have to try new things – that's why this sub fund is called "**Let's Try It!**" This sub fund can provide funds for strategies to accomplish this. **This sub fund provides grants of \$100 - \$500 for congregation members who are doing something connected to this ministry of evangelism.**

What can I use it for? What are some examples?

A "Let's Try It" Grant can be used for **supplies, materials, food, leader fees, whatever you need** to get your new idea going. Here are some potential ideas for ministries:

- Hosting an event at the church building designed in part to include youth or children from the community.
- A "theology on tap" program to meet with young adults at a bar to discuss how God is important in their lives.
- A community survey or some other research to discern what the needs of the community are, and how we might be able to help with them.
- A transportation ministry to provide ways for people to attend a program at the church building.
- A great idea from a child or teenager, which we grown-ups can't even think of!

Okay! How do I apply?

Any member of Prince of Peace can apply! Just contact me or any member of council, and we'll help you fill out a brief form to apply for \$100 - \$500 for your new idea! The form will go to council for approval, and then you can get started! —*Pastor Scholtes*



WORD OF God

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!

Wednesday, July 01	Psalm 119:161-168; Jeremiah 18:1-11; Matthew 11:20-24;
Thursday, July 02	Psalm 145:8-14; Zechariah 1:1-6; Romans 7:1-6;
Friday, July 03	Psalm 145:8-14; Zechariah 2:6-13; Romans 7:7-20;
Saturday, July 04	Psalm 145:8-14; Zechariah 4:1-7; Luke 10:21-24;
Sunday, July 05	Zechariah 9:9-12; Ps. 145:8-14; Romans 7:15-25; Mat. 11:16-19, 25-30
Monday, July 06	Psalm 131; Jeremiah 27:1-11, 16-22; Romans 1:18-25;
Tuesday, July 07	Psalm 131; Jeremiah 28:10-17; Romans 3:1-8;
Wednesday, July 08	Psalm 131; Jeremiah 13:1-11; John 13:1-17;
Thursday, July 09	Psalm 65:9-13; Isaiah 48:1-5; Romans 2:12-16;
Friday, July 10	Psalm 65:9-13; Isaiah 48:6-11; Romans 15:14-21;
Saturday, July 11	Psalm 65:9-13; Isaiah 52:1-6; John 12:44-50;
Sunday, July 12	Isaiah 55:10-13; Ps. 65:9-13; Romans 8:1-11; Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23
Monday, July 13	Psalm 92; Leviticus 26:3-20; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8;
Tuesday, July 14	Psalm 92; Deuteronomy 28:1-14; Ephesians 4:17-5:2;
Wednesday, July 15	Psalm 92; Proverbs 11:23-30; Matthew 13:10-17;
Thursday, July 16	Psalm 86:11-17; Isaiah 41:21-29; Hebrews 2:1-9;
Friday, July 17	Psalm 86:11-17; Isaiah 44:9-17; Hebrews 6:13-20;
Saturday, July 18	Psalm 86:11-17; Isaiah 44:18-20; Matthew 7:15-20;
Sunday, July 19	Isaiah 44:6-8; Ps. 86:11-17; Romans 8:12-25; Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43
Monday, July 20	Psalm 75; Nahum 1:1-13; Revelation 14:12-20;
Tuesday, July 21	Psalm 75; Zephaniah 3:1-13; Galatians 4:21-5:1;
Wednesday, July 22	Psalm 75; Daniel 12:1-13; Matthew 12:15-21;
Thursday, July 23	Psalm 119:129-136; 1 Kings 1:28-37; 1 Corinthians 4:14-20;
Friday, July 24	Psalm 119:129-136; 1 Kings 1:38-48; Acts 7:44-53;
Saturday, July 25	Psalm 119:129-136; 1 Kings 2:1-4; Matthew 12:38-42;
Sunday, July 26	1 Kings 3:5-12; Ps. 119:129-136; Rom. 8:26-39; Matt. 13:31-33, 44-52
Monday, July 27	Psalm 119:121-128; 1 Kings 3:16-28; James 3:13-18;
Tuesday, July 28	Psalm 119:121-128; 1 Kings 4:29-34; Ephesians 6:10-18;
Wednesday, July 29	Psalm 119:121-128; Proverbs 1:1-7, 20-33; Mark 4:30-34;
Thursday, July 30	Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21; Proverbs 10:1-5; Philippians 4:10-15;
Friday, July 31	Psalm 145:8-9, 14-21; Isaiah 51:17-23; Romans 9:6-13;

2026 Graduate Recognition:

We honor you all and congratulate you on your accomplishments. We pray that your future plans will be blessed with success.



Clarence (C.J.) Kizer graduated with a Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling from Marywood University, Scranton. His future plans are to find counseling employment in the area.



Quincy Owen Miller graduated from Bangor Area High School with a high school diploma. Quincy is pursuing a degree in Computer Science from either NCC or LCC.



Aria Hughes completed Kindergarten at Floyd R. Shafer Elementary School, and she will enter first grade in the fall.



Maverick Baggitt completed Kindergarten at Five Points Elementary, and he will enter first grade in the fall.

Congratulations!



Turtzo Memorial Scholarships Awarded

On Sunday, June 7, we awarded the 2026 Turtzo Memorial Scholarships to the following college students in our congregation: **Anthony Diabo, Blake Kornafel, and Peyton Walters**. Each student received \$3,316 (payable to their college) from the Anthony D. and Jeanne M. Turtzo Perpetual Fund, a fund created with a bequest from Jeanne M. Turtzo and managed by Prince of Peace.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jer. 29:11).

*"The generous person will prosper,
And whoever refreshes others will himself be refreshed."
Proverbs 11:25*



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

Website: www.popbangor.org

Web Master: Evelyn Diabo

Social Media Manager: Nick Walters

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

- **Pastor: Rev. Michael J. Scholtes**
- **Minister of Youth and Worship: Tina Johns**
- **Minister of Music: Martin Yazdzik**
- **Bookkeeper: Rev. Joyce Weishaupt**
- **Financial Secretary: Brenda Hughes**
- **Custodian: Brittnee Evans**
- **Parish Nurse: Justine Saviet, RN**
- **Administrative Assistant: Annette Buss**

Congregation Council Members

Kale Baker, President	Jackie Horn
April Miller, Secretary	Justine Saviet
Tina Johns, Vice President	Brenda Hughes
Alex Scholtes, Youth Rep.	Connie Itterly
Jean Janosa	Kerri Miller
Mary O'Meally	Brittany Walters
Rev. Michael J. Scholtes	Holly Blakeslee

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!

August 2026 Newsletter is:

Tuesday,
July 14 at Noon

****Please submit items in a Word Document not PDF format, thank you!****

****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.



NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

We Are Stronger When We Serve Together

Submitted by Stacey Burke, NEPA Synod Director of Communications

When a fire forced St. John's Lutheran Church in Allentown out of its building during Lent, neighboring congregations stepped in to help. Members of St. John's and Christ Lutheran in Allentown worshiped together, shared leadership, and supported one another through the challenge.

Reflecting on the experience during the 6261 Ministry Communities panel, Deacon Michael Krenz shared, "We have a sense of joy and we know that if we have trials and tribulations, the other congregations will say, 'Can I help?'"

Throughout the 2026 Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Assembly, one theme surfaced again and again. Whether discussing ministry communities, new worshipping communities, global partnerships, or emerging ministries, participants shared a common message: we are stronger when we serve together. Mission Support helps create and strengthen those connections.

At assembly, participants heard stories from 6261 Ministry Communities, where congregations are exploring new ways to share leadership, resources, and ministry. Panelists spoke honestly about both the challenges and joys of collaboration. While the work requires patience, communication, and trust, many shared how relationships formed through these partnerships have strengthened congregations and expanded their ability to serve their communities.

The assembly theme, *Imagine*, was reflected in stories shared during the Fresh Expressions panel. Participants heard about ministries reaching people through community meals, recovery ministries, young adult gatherings, video game nights, mobile shower ministries, and other creative efforts designed to meet people where they are. Together, these ministries demonstrate how God is at work beyond traditional church walls. Speaking during the panel, April Mulvey of Hope's Table in Reading shared, "I serve a big God. So I dream big and I believe that God will just make it happen." Her words captured the spirit of ministries that are willing to try new things, build new relationships, and trust God to open new opportunities for sharing the gospel.





The assembly also celebrated the growth of the Indonesian Lutheran Church of Scranton, which was authorized as a Synod Authorized Worshiping Community (SAWC) in 2025. Worshiping in both Indonesian and English and building relationships with neighboring congregations, this ministry is a visible reminder that the church continues to grow in new and life-giving ways.

Beyond Northeastern Pennsylvania, assembly attendees were reminded that we are part of a much larger church. Through companion synod relationships in Tanzania, Saxony, Argentina and Uruguay, Slovenia, and our domestic partnership with the Northwest Synod of Wisconsin, congregations are connected to a global community of faith. These relationships allow us to learn from one another, pray for one another, and discover new ways God is at work throughout the world.

As Bishop Christopher deForest reflected, "We're coming together not just to survive. We're coming together not just to thrive, but we're coming together to do mission of God in the world." Through relationships with congregations, ministry partners, companion synods, pastors, deacons, licensed lay ministers, and church leaders, we are continually discovering new opportunities to participate in God's mission.

Assembly also highlighted how Mission Support helps leverage additional resources for ministry. Through partnerships with the ELCA, seminaries, and grant programs, congregations and ministry leaders have received support for new worshiping communities, outreach ministries, leadership development, Fresh Expressions training, and collaborative ministry initiatives.

Following her election as bishop, Bishop-Elect Jennifer Dee reflected on her excitement for how God is calling the NEPA Synod to serve together, sharing that she is "incredibly excited to see how God calls us to do ministry together." Her words echoed what had already been demonstrated throughout the assembly: ministry is not something we do alone.



Every congregation that shares Mission Support is helping make these ministries possible. Together, through Mission Support, we are not simply sustaining ministry. We are strengthening congregations, raising up leaders, forming new ministries, and joining God's mission in the world. If you would like to learn more about the ministries and stories shared at assembly, recordings of the plenary sessions are available on the synod's YouTube channel, with links and assembly resources available at godslove.org/assembly2026. Together, we are imagining what God can do next.



Help Make Ministry Possible

Through Mission Support, congregations share resources, support leaders, and expand ministry. Thank you for helping strengthen congregations, support leaders, and launch new ministries. Learn more about Mission Support and how your congregation can support at godslove.org/missionsupport.