

SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

St. James, Pitman: Rural and Vibrant



St. James, Pitman, is a very rural congregation that maintains a vibrant ministry of outreach, Christian education, worship, and social ministry. The congregation recently dedicated its new ADA accessible restrooms and wheelchair lift with Bishop Zeiser and a packed house in attendance. The new restroom and wheelchair lift became a reality after the congregation received a significant bequest from a former member's estate. Making the building accessible was the logical way to open the doors and welcome in the community.

Each year, the congregation, which has 150 baptized members, crafts and ships nearly 200 quilts to Lutheran World Relief sites around the world. Locally, St. James raises thousands of dollars to help people within the community, while meeting its benevolence tithe to our Synod. When Bishop Zeiser learned that the quilts were shipped to places like Madagascar, Tanzania, and Indonesia, he said, "some people may think you're 'in the middle of nowhere', but for the people receiving the work of your hands you are very much somewhere."

The congregation's vision of reaching out and being a welcoming place has already borne fruit. The quilting group, open to anyone in the community, now has its largest membership ever and the quilt production has taken off. As word about the accessibility project has spread in the community, worship attendance has risen as well. For a little church 'in the middle of nowhere', many more are finding that it is really somewhere to be.



St. Paul, Fountain Hill, NFL Canned Food Challenge Award

The Bethlehem-Easton Mission District Council challenged their congregations to participate in collecting canned goods for the food bank(s) of their choice. It was an effort to join forces; and with a bit of a challenge, to help others.

The goal was to collect a canned good for each point scored during the playoffs! Yes, that meant each congregation was asked to collect 523 cans. The prize was not revealed to the congregations ahead of time.

The suspense grew from week to week as the scores piled up and the cans were counted. Who would win the prize? As the points total grew, it seemed like an unreachable goal; yet many remained hopeful and determined.

After 11 play-off games, watching their canned goods pile up at their altar each week to be counted, St. Paul Fountain Hill was honored to receive a framed award for their "Mighty Effort" in the NFL Canned Food Challenge by surpassing the goal as they collected a total of 594 items. A total of 2,279 cans were collected & distributed to several food banks within the district.

Yes, the "Mighty 45" (as their Pastoral Care Provider Marlene Werkheiser calls them) stepped up to the challenge! As she told them that first week, "This is a great way for our small congregation to help others and to possibly win bragging rights to the prize." The challenge intrigued them enough to muster up an average of 13 cans per worshipping parishioner.

"I am beyond proud of them", said Werkheiser. "For a small congregation, they really wanted to show others that their congregation can (and wants to) participate in ministries that help to do God's work."

Pictured below is the "Mighty 45" on February 9, after they reached the goal.



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