

PAUL'S PARISH NEWS



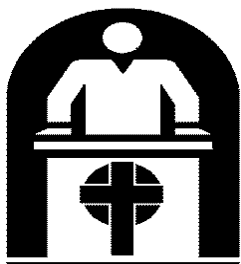
SAINT PAUL'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
Breinigsville, PA

APRIL 2024



St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
8227 Hamilton Boulevard
Breinigsville, PA 18031
Telephone: 610-398-7000

PAUL'S PARISH NEWS is published by St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church



Dear Members and Friends,

An overarching theme of the Easter season is one of belonging. From Thomas still finding his place despite, or perhaps because of, his doubts, to our place in the sheepfold and on the vine, to the embrace of the Spirit, we are reminded repeatedly about our place in God's family. Russian nesting dolls may be helpful in illustrating this theme.

Jesus is within God, and we are in turn within Jesus as his sheep, his fruit, his people. Just like those smaller dolls inside the larger doll, we are embraced and protected at every level. We are not just with Jesus but within Jesus, as much a part of him as he is of God. The security that knowledge brings can be a springboard for action in the world: sharing the good news, spreading the love of Jesus, and working for justice.

When we find our place and sense of belonging within the abiding, triune God, we are also reminded that there are others who belong to God with whom we are encouraged to build community despite our differences. The Easter texts use multiple images of "the many": a flock of sheep (Easter 4), the branches of a grape vine (Easter 5), and a multitude of strangers of various nationalities and languages gathered on the Day of Pentecost. There is a push for unity within the body of Christ throughout the Easter texts. As we move through them, the images of what binds us together become more and more abstract. The resurrected Jesus gathers his followers around him behind locked doors (Easter 2) and then around a beach fire and breakfast (Easter 3). Images of physical gathering give way to metaphorical nonhuman images of flocks of sheep (Easter 4) and vineyard branches full of grapes (Easter 5). Then the invisible but powerful Holy Spirit begins to move and push us together (Easter 6 and 7). It all builds to Pentecost when we are brought together through language and deeper understanding. Through this journey, we are taken from the very familiar group of disciples, to images out of nature that show unity without diversity, and then finally to an image that is highly relatable: a large group of people who go from only seeing their differences to being unified by the Holy Spirit. It is this unity, within God and within the body of Christ, that drives our Easter season and should continue to drive our efforts to live out our roles as disciples in the world. (From Sundays and Seasons "Preparing for Easter," p. 149).

Pastor Miller

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER

Palm Sunday – March 24th, 9:00am and 10:30 am

We raise our branches and shout “Hosanna!” then hear the Passion of Our Lord.

Maunday Thursday – March 28th, 7:00pm

We receive individual absolution and Holy Communion and observe the stripping of the altar and the draping of it in black cloth.

Good Friday – March 29th, 10:30am

Good Friday marks Jesus’ trial, crucifixion, and death. Included in the service is the adoration of the cross.

The Resurrection of Our Lord – 9:00am and 10:30am

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Special music will be offered before the service.

HOLY HUMOR SUNDAY

We will celebrate **Holy Humor Sunday on April 7th**. Holy Humor Sunday, Day of Joy and Laughter, Bright Monday, White Monday, Emmaus Day, Dyngus Day, Risus Paschalis – these are all titles for a very old Christian tradition. The purpose of the day is to celebrate the resurrection in a joyful, humorous manner.

In the past 30 years an organization called “The Fellowship of Merry Christians” has revived this ancient custom and many churches today celebrate what many call “Holy Humor Sunday.”

It is a day to make light of what we are about on a Sunday morning. Sometimes we get so hung up on the solemnity of worship and doing things “right” that we become rigid and think there is only one way to do things. It is one day out of the 52 Sundays that we worship when we can “not take ourselves so seriously.” It is a day that we celebrate the joy of the resurrection, God defying the works of the devil. The devil thought he got rid of Jesus. The joke was on him. We can celebrate, sing, laugh, and have fun.

Churches have done many different things on this day. People are asked to wear mismatched clothing, two different socks or shoes, a tie that doesn’t match etc. Many people have had a good time and enjoyed it immensely. Come and join in the fun.

PRAYER SHAWL NEWS

All Twiddle Sleeves Distributed!

Just a note to say that all of the twiddle sleeves have been distributed – with the final 24 sleeves going to the Lutheran Home in Topton. Thanks to all the sleeve makers and sleeve sew-ers for helping out on this project. Special thanks to Judy Walker who continued to sew embellishments on dozens of sleeves. Here is a summary of where 105 sleeves landed:

32 – Atrium of Allentown	4 – Congregation members
40 – Luther Crest	5 – Lehigh Center
24 – Topton Lutheran Home	

Chemo Hat Project

The yarn for chemo hats is here – purchased using a Thrivent Action Team grant. Please see Judy Noll or Steph Wagaman for yarn. There are still two folders of crocheted hat patterns on the table in the Narthex. If you would like the knitted hat patterns, please see Steph. If you prefer purchasing your own yarn, many of the suggested brands are common to Hobby Lobby, Michael's and JoAnne's craft stores.

Project Warm Up America (WUA)

If you are making 7" x 9" rectangles for Project Warm Up America, note that the pieces must be "finished" – i.e. yarn ends sewn in. The Web site has some pattern suggestions, but you can make rectangles in whatever patterns you like. It is a great way to use up partial skeins in your stash. Note that there are many partial skeins or single skeins in the yarn collection at church. We will get that out at plarn sessions for people to take.

Plarn/Project Working Sessions



Got loom! We now have a peg loom to weave plarn mats. A great big thank you to Bill Wagaman for making the 3' x 3' loom for us. Also thanks to the plarn group at Zion Maxatawny for helping us get started on the loom. Weaving the mats goes more quickly than crocheting – and more people can help. Note that we will continue to crochet mats as well.

Continued on next page

Just a reminder that we will be having working sessions for making Plarn – or any of the above projects –on the third Tuesday of the month from 1:30 – 3:30PM. Feel free to join us making plarn, working on a sleeping mat, or knitting/crocheting hats or rectangles. Mark your calendar for **April 16 at 1:30PM** – and for the third Tuesday of the months following.

ST. PAUL’S 2024 BASKET SOCIAL

The Basket Social Committee is planning a third Basket Social on September 14, 2024 from 9:00AM to 2:00PM. At this time, we are looking for members of the congregation to donate empty baskets, made up baskets, or items to put in a basket. New or nearly new items are preferred. There are index cards with possible ideas for many varied gift baskets on the table in the narthex. Feel free to take one of these index cards, purchase items related to this type of basket, and bring them to church at your earliest convenience. You can also create your own basket and bring it to church. Please list the items contained in your basket on an index card and place it in the basket. You don’t need to wrap the basket. The committee will wrap and label the baskets.

We will also have 5 “special” prizes (of higher value than regular baskets). The committee has decided upon these prizes for this year’s social. They are the following: Philadelphia Eagles Basket, Michael Kors purse and wallet, a smokeless fire pit, an assortment of wine related items, and a beautiful quilt made by Judy Walker.

Some of the proceeds and items from the Basket Social are donated to 2 organizations. The 1st organization is the Allentown Area Food Bank. During the day of the Basket Social, there will be a paper products tower – where people bring food items to donate in exchange for tickets to win the paper products. The 2nd organization, Caring DAM Hearts Inc., is the beneficiary of a 50/50 drawing. The focus of this charity is to give help and hope to the homeless, veterans and less fortunate. Ten percent of the event proceeds will be donated to this charity.

If you have any questions, please reach out to any one of our committee members. The members of the 2024 Basket Social Committee are Carol Derr-Breinig, Melanie Dimovitz, Anita Eisenhard, Rosie Gallagher, Amanda Mesko, Pastor Miller, Peggy Saylor, Becky Theodore, Judy Walker, and Steph Wagaman. If you are interested we could use a few more people on the committee.

PARISH NURSING NOTES

“Stress and Your Health”

April 2024

Peggy Saylor, RN

One of the “awareness focuses” for April is “Stress symptoms: Effects on your body and behavior.” You may not even be aware of how stress is affecting your health. Stress can affect your body, your emotions, and your behavior. If you can realize the symptoms of stress it can help you to manage the stress in your life as we all have some! Not dealing with stress can lead to a variety of health problems such as heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, diabetes and obesity.

Headaches, muscle tension, fatigue, stomach upset, and sleep problems can all be some of the signs of stress but may be blamed on other causes without realizing that stress is the cause. The answer to dealing with stress can be difficult but here are some suggestions on possible stress management: get regular physical activity on a daily basis, practice relaxation techniques such as meditation, deep breathing, yoga or massage, spend time with family and friends (unless they are the cause of your stress!), remember to laugh, write in a journal, get adequate sleep, eat a healthy diet and set time aside for a hobby that you enjoy. Try to avoid alcohol use, tobacco and the use of any illegal drugs.

If you cannot handle your stress, see your health care provider and explain your symptoms as they may want to check into other possible causes. Also consider seeing a counselor or therapist who can help you identify the cause of your stress and learn coping techniques. If you are considering harming yourself, please call 911 or your local suicide hotline.

Stress in one’s life is unavoidable but learning how to cope with your stress is the answer to avoiding the health symptoms that stress can cause!

Information from www.mayoclinic.org Accessed on 3/14/24.

**THE CHURCH OFFICE
WILL BE CLOSED
EASTER MONDAY
EASTER FLOWERS MAY BE PICKED UP
TUESDAY THROUGH THURSDAY**

WOMEN OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH [WELCA]

The monthly meeting was on March 13, 2024.

Upcoming Events:

Spring Cluster Event on April 13, 2024, at Hope Lutheran Church, Cherryville on the topic – Caregiving. Registration is at 10:00 a.m., light breakfast. There will be a speaker from the Northampton County Department of Aging.

34th Annual Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod Convention on May 18, 2024, Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church, Lehighton. Registration 9:00 a.m.; worship begins at 10:00 a.m. Registration for event ends on May 11, 2024, and there is a registration fee of \$30.00 which includes breakfast and lunch.

Fall Fun and Service Event on September 20,21, 2024, at Kirby Episcopal House in Mountain Top. \$75.00 overnight guest fee and \$30.00 fee for Saturday Sessions.

See bulletin board for more information on these upcoming events.

ALL WOMEN ARE INVITED TO THESE EVENTS

Our Bible study was *Scripture and nature: Teachers of faith Session three Rivers* by Sara Olson-Smith.

Join us on Wednesday, April 10, 2024, at 9:30 a.m. for our next meeting

LEHIGH ZION CEMETERY SHAREHOLDERS MEETING

April 8, 2024, the Zion Lehigh Cemetery will have their annual shareholders meeting.

Anyone having a plot on the cemetery is a shareholder and is welcome to attend this meeting.

Officers are elected at this meeting.

APRIL 8, 2024, 7 P.M., ZION LEHIGH LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sharon Bortz is the secretary of the board

UPCOMING EVENTS

CONCERT SERIES CONTINUES – April 21st

We are starting up our concert series again after a long hiatus. **Russ Rentler will be our guest musician on April 21st at 2:00pm.** He is a singer songwriter and multi-instrumentalist performing original music on multiple stringed instruments steeped in the Appalachian tradition.

YARD SALE

St. Paul's will again have a yard sale on Saturday, May 18th from 8:00am to 1:00pm in the parking lot. If it rains it will be inside the church. We need at least 7 to 10 people to sell their "wares." Please gather your items soon and bring them to sell at the yard sale. We need a good turnout this year for it to be successful. Refreshments will be served.

IRONPIGS GAME

Announcing the IronPigs game, Sunday, June 23, 2024. Game time is 1:35 p.m. Gates open at Noon. We are in the PenTeleData 3rd Base Party Porch. We have a limit of 30 tickets and the price is \$37.00. Mark your calendars. A signup sheet will be on the table in the Narthex or you can call the church office at 610-398-7000 to make your reservation.

USHERS/WORSHIP ASSISTANTS ARE NEEDED

We are in need of people to help with the 10:30 a.m. worship service. For the service, worship is the same as before Covid 19 – i.e. hymns are sung, offering is collected in the pew, and communion is taken at the altar. You will be handing out the bulletin, helping to collect offering, and directing the congregation to the altar and handing them a communion cup. If you would be willing and interested in helping, please contact Steph Wagaman at 610-395-0355 or stepbillwagaman@rcn.com or call the church office at 610-398-7000.

HOSPITALIZED?

Parish Code for hospitalized parishioners is 321. Please give this code when you are admitted to the hospital so the pastor can be made aware that you are a patient and can administer the pastoral care you require while you are hospitalized.

Please take note, that if you are admitted on a Thursday night, Friday, Saturday, or Sunday, the pastor will not be aware that you are hospitalized until Monday mid-morning, since the church does not have office hours on Friday, and the hospital pastoral care office is not available on Saturday or Sunday.

This means, if you would like the Pastor to know you are hospitalized on the weekend, please call the church office or the Pastor.

CARD MINISTRY



Here at St. Paul's we send cards to members of the congregation who are ill or in need of a cheerful word. These cards are on the table in the narthex. When you are here on a Sunday, or during the week, check the table to see if there is a card. Please sign your name and help bring a smile to a fellow member.

THANK YOUS

To My St. Paul's Family,

With Special Thanks, Your friendship is the Sunshine that warms my days and puts a Smile in my heart.

Thank you for the Get Well card. It brought a smile to my face. St. Paul's has been a very important part of my life and I miss seeing everyone on Sunday mornings.

Betty Moyer

Thank you for your support of the Allentown Food Bank and for your generous donation of \$82 from your Souper Bowl Collection in February. Your gift and support are very important and vital to our ongoing mission.

Beth Walker, Allentown Area Ecumenical Food Bank Board Member



3 Nick Bellucci	18 Peggy Kern
4 Rich Hartley	20 Cole Clark
5 Kimberly Sicher	26 Finley Cope
10 Brooke Brumbach	26 Bob Nickisher
10 June Kellogg	30 Bruce Saylor
17 Janine Ritter	



14 David & Pamela Craig

MEMORIAL CONTRIBUTION

The following memorial contribution has been received in memory of Gloria Selig:

Scott & Debbie Selig

MIGHTY METAPHOR MACHINE

While moving to a new parish, Rev. Watt A. Hardworker lost his metaphor machine. His friend, Rev. Hesa Goodpastor, wondered how Watt could preach without metaphors. Another pal, Rev. Bloomingwhere I.M. At, remarked, “There isn’t enough skill in all of us clergy to preach week after week without some metaphors! The ‘Old, Old Story’ has been told so often that people tune it out without metaphors to help them hear it afresh.” He suggested organizing a metaphor collection to sustain Watt.

Hesa was open to the idea but worried that, with Easter approaching, Watt would be at a total loss. “What a catastrophe, especially starting out in a new church,” said Bloomingwhere. “How can the poor pastor possibly preach Easter without any metaphors?”

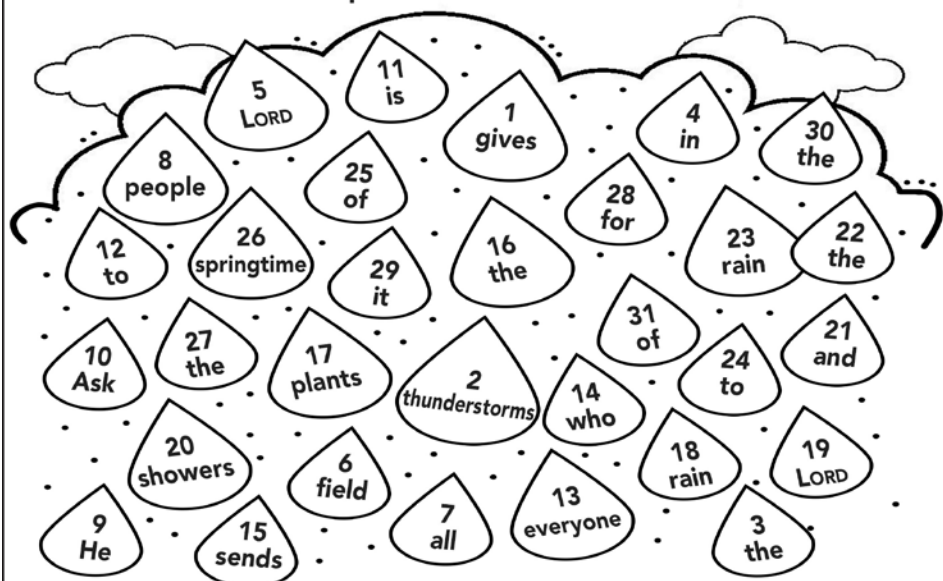
Hesa added, “No ‘butterflies emerging from the cocoon,’ no ‘awakening of daffodil bulbs after the long winter,’ no ‘flight of the Phoenix,’ no ‘resurrection as an image for a fresh start.’”

“He’ll be left with nothing to say but that Jesus arose from the grave,” Bloom exclaimed. “Just imagine!”

—Stan Purdum

Puzzle!

Complete a Bible verse about spring by writing the word from each raindrop on the correct numbered line below.



10 16 5 28 18

4 22 26 ;

29 11 3 19 14 15

27 2 .

9 1 20 31 23

12 7 8 21 17 25

30 6 24 13 .

Zechariah 10:1, NIV

Answer: Ask the LORD for rain in the springtime; it is the LORD who sends the thunderstorms. He gives showers of rain to all people, and plants of the field to everyone. Zechariah 10:1, NIV

**DEADLINE FOR THE NEXT
NEWSLETTER IS
APRIL 14, 2024**

**PLEASE HAVE YOUR
ARTICLES SUBMITTED TO
THE CHURCH OFFICE
BY THIS DATE.**





CHURCH OFFICE: 610-398-7000
HOSPITAL CODE: #321
HANDICAPPED ACCESSIBLE
EMAIL: office@stpaulsbbville.org
Website: www.stpaulsbbville.org

STAFF

Pastor..... The Rev. Carey L. Miller
Organist/Choir Director Ms. Judy Noll
Handbell Director..... Mr. Richard Steltz
Parish Secretary Mrs. Cindy Krasnansky

April 2024 St. Paul's Lutheran Church

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY																																																	
	1	2	3 7:00 p.m.-Basket Social Committee Mtg.	4 9:30 a.m.-TOPS 6:15 p.m.-Joyful Ringers 7:30 p.m.-Choir	5	6																																																	
7 2ND SUNDAY OF EASTER HUMOR SUNDAY 9:00 a.m.-Worship 9:15 a.m.-Sunday School 9:15 a.m.-Confirmation Class 10:30 a.m.-Worship	8 9:30 a.m.-Bible Study	9	10 9:30 a.m.-W-ELCA 7:00 p.m.-Council	11 9:30 a.m.-TOPS 6:15 p.m.-Joyful Ringers 7:30 p.m.-Choir	12	13																																																	
14 3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER 9:00 a.m.-Worship 9:15 a.m.-Sunday School 9:15 a.m.-Confirmation Class 10:30 a.m.-Worship 11:30 a.m.-Potluck Lunch	15 9:30 a.m.-Bible Study 1:00 p.m.-Worship & Music Committee Mtg.	16 1:30 p.m.-Plarn Session 6:30 p.m.-Haafsville Board Meeting	17 6:00 p.m.-St. Paul's Cemetery Board Mtg.	18 9:30 a.m.-TOPS 6:15 p.m.-Joyful Ringers 7:30 p.m.-Choir	19	20																																																	
21 4TH SUNDAY OF EASTER 9:00 a.m.-Worship 9:15 a.m.-Sunday School 9:15 a.m.-Confirmation Class 10:30 a.m.-Worship 2:00 p.m.-Russ Rentler Concert	22 9:30 a.m.-Bible Study 	23 ELECTION DAY 	24	25 9:30 a.m.-TOPS 6:15 p.m.-Joyful Ringers 7:30 p.m.-Choir	26	27																																																	
28 5TH SUNDAY OF EASTER 9:00 a.m.-Worship 9:15 a.m.-Sunday School 9:15 a.m.-Confirmation Class 10:30 a.m.-Worship	29 9:30 a.m.-Bible Study	30 1:00 p.m.-Stewardship Committee At Bruce Saylor's Home				<table border="1"> <tr><th colspan="7">April 2024</th></tr> <tr><th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th></tr> <tr><td></td><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td></tr> <tr><td>7</td><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td></tr> <tr><td>14</td><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td></tr> <tr><td>21</td><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td></tr> <tr><td>28</td><td>29</td><td>30</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	April 2024							S	M	T	W	T	F	S		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
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WORSHIP ASSISTANTS

April 2024

**If you cannot fulfill an assigned duty, please call the church office at 610-398-7000 or
the Council Person of the Month - Bob Bruchak 484-357-2557**

Sunday, April 7, 2024

9:00AM

No Assistants

10:30AM

Ushers: Ken Ritter, Peggy Saylor

Altar Guild: Janine Ritter

Communion Asst: Rosemary Lehman

Communion Bread: Tom & June Kellogg

Greeter: Mary Schneider

Lay Asst: Sharon Bortz

Reader: Daisy Pearson

Sunday, April 21, 2024

9:00AM

No Assistants

10:30AM

Ushers: Cal Fetherolf, Bruce Wagaman

Altar Guild: Steph Wagaman

Communion Asst: Sandi Wagaman

Communion Bread Melanie Dimovitz:

Greeter: Carol Derr-Breinig

Lay Asst: Dick Steltz

Reader: Cal Fetherolf

Sunday, April 14, 2024

9:00AM

No Assistants

10:30AM

Ushers: Jennifer Bentsen, Rosie Gallagher

Altar Guild: Esther Seibert

Communion Asst: Anita Eisenhard

Communion Bread: Pat Spencer

Greeter: Zack Dimovitz

Lay Asst: Bob Bruchak

Reader: Sharon Bortz

Sunday, April 28, 2024

9:00AM

No Assistants

10:30AM

Ushers: Frank Bennighoff, Richard Hartley

Altar Guild: Amy Williams

Communion Asst: Peggy Saylor

Communion Bread: Dorothy O'Connors

Greeter: Rosie Gallagher

Lay Asst: Rosemary Lehman

Reader: Lacey Edwards



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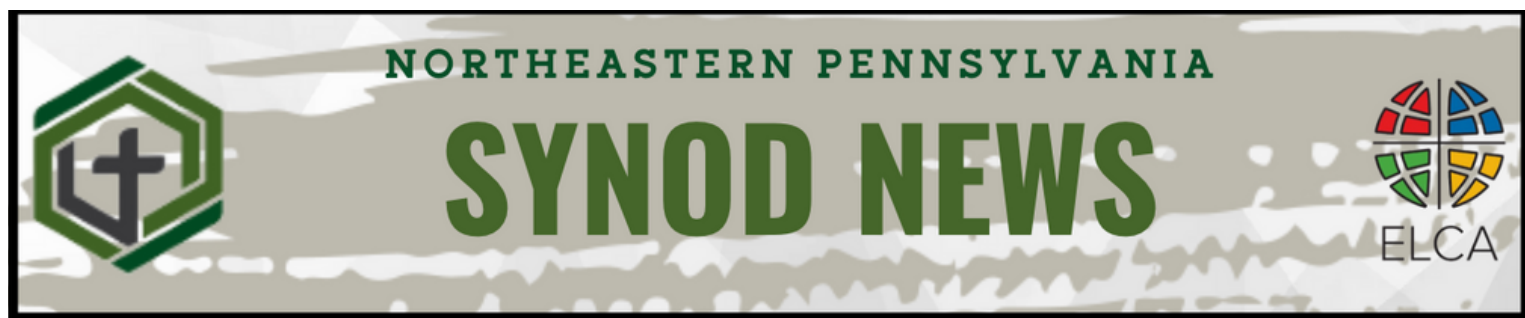


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Just Being There: Our Alaska Experience as Sitka Lutheran Church Volunteers

By: Gail Colahan

Sitka is located on the west coast of Baranof Island in the Alaska panhandle. Most of the island lies within the limits of the Tongass National Forest, a temperate rainforest, rich with wildlife and scenic vistas. Inhabited by Tlingit for over 10,000 years, ruled by Russia starting in 1799, then transferred from Russia to the US in 1867, this island community of 8,400 people continues to reflect characteristics of these varied cultures. For over 30 years the abundance of nature, scenery and cultural heritage has attracted cruise ships to Sitka. For most of that time Sitka Lutheran Church (SLC) has supported a summer volunteer program to assist the church in being a welcoming presence amidst a burgeoning tourist presence, which numbered nearly 600,000 in 2023 when we participated as volunteers.

Flash back to June 2019 when we first visited Sitka, not as cruise passengers but as plane travelers on a self-guided tour throughout Southeast Alaska. It just so happened we were in Sitka on Sunday morning so we decided to go to worship after finding an ELCA church within walking distance of our hotel. Entering the church, we read from hallway signage that in 1840 while Sitka was a Russian colony, Finns founded SLC making it the oldest Protestant congregation on the US West Coast. Included with other historical signage hung a poster declaring “Volunteers Wanted”. The sign combined with our fascination with the church’s origins, its geographic location, and the history and culture of this place prompted us to make further inquiries. We learned about SLC’s program inviting volunteers to come to Sitka for a month to welcome summer cruise ship visitors to SLC, with the SLC faith family providing housing and the use of a car during the volunteers’ stay. Our intrigue with the idea of such an opportunity prompted us to complete an interest form despite knowing we weren’t in a position at the time to make such a commitment.

Four years later we found ourselves in Sitka. Driving into town to open the church, we marveled at vistas of Sitka Sound and surrounding forest-covered land while passing marinas filled with fishing vessels. On days when large cruise ships were in port, Greg greeted visitors outside SLC’s front door, enticing them with the smell of freshly popped popcorn and the query, “Did you know that Sitka Lutheran is the oldest Protestant congregation on the west coast?”. Gail provided a brief overview of the church’s history and pointed out historical objects from the original 1843 church for the curious who ventured inside, and at times drifted into conversations about faith and the church. All visitors received a warm welcome whether they choose to hear the church’s history, find solitude in the sanctuary, take a much-needed rest break, or buy some popcorn.

While Greg often felt frustrated when people just walked by with their heads down (probably in part due to the modern façade of SLC’s 3rd church building as compared to the original features of the nearby Russian Orthodox Cathedral), he did experience some gratifying encounters - a conversation with a gentleman from China who was interested in talking about the history of Sitka and well-wishers who knew about SLC’s volunteer program and just wanted to say hi. On the day we transitioned with the previous volunteers, Greg stood alongside Kurt out in front of the church. A family walking by stopped and

requested a prayer for their child who had a health affliction. Kurt, an ordained pastor, knelt down close to the child in the stroller and proceeded to offer a prayer. Afterwards, the family departed in peace and Greg and Kurt shared their thankfulness in being able to honor the family's request.

On another day with few visitors in town, two seasonal shuttle bus drivers walked into the church. After Gail guided them to the sanctuary to share the church's story, the gentleman asked for time to pray. Sensing the gravity of his request, Gail invited him to stay as long as necessary and indicated she would request visitors quietly respect his being there until he was ready to leave. It was at least a half hour before he and his friend emerged from the sanctuary and shared that his sister was dying and he couldn't be with her and that his time spent in prayer in the church had been the best way for him to face the crisis. Thanks be to God.

In addition to our encounters with visitors, the people of Sitka Lutheran Church blessed us with the warmest of welcomes. Pastor Rudd shared personal and church background and introduced us to Alaska Synod's Bishop Shelly during a SLC hosted Southeast Cluster Meeting. Heather, the secretary who grew up in Sitka, assisted with everything from the latest cruise schedule updates to lending intriguing details and answers to questions about Sitka's more recent history. Sue provided a tour around town to familiarize us with the schools, hospitals, and businesses that are part of the daily life of this area and took us to a refuge for orphaned bear cubs. Paula, another parishioner, gifted us with sweet treats and invited us to her house for a grilled salmon dinner. Wayne guided us through the Alaska wilderness on a glorious hike past cascades and waterfalls to Bear Lake. Harvey and Kathleen, managers of the SLC volunteer program, provided not only a place to stay but enjoyable storytelling over meals and desserts. Even the neighbors extended their welcome with soup and muffins. We were truly humbled by the kindness, generosity, hospitality, and support we received.

Just being there was such a wonderful experience on so many levels – experiencing what it's like to be strangers welcomed into a community, serving as volunteers at SLC, living for 5 weeks on an island in a different environment, exploring the beauty and wonder of the Tongass rainforest and its wildlife, learning about the history and cultures that influenced and characterize Sitka, meeting and talking with people from around the world, and getting to know and become friends with the SLC faith family. We will never know the impact of our being there for most tourists who visited the church. However, SLC parishioners were abundantly grateful and thanked us profusely for assisting in their being a welcoming presence. We also know that the experience had a profound impact on us. Just being there we experienced so many wonderful God moments and blessings – lives touched, joy witnessed, beauty revealed, friendships made. We are so much richer for having had the opportunity to live in a different place and serve as volunteers for Sitka Lutheran Church.



Keynote Speaker: Marie Anne serves as the Senior Director for Building Resilient Communities (BRC) at the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Ms. Sliwinski has 20 years of experience working in the non-profit sector, 14 of which are dedicated in international humanitarian and development programs. Ms. Sliwinski oversees BRC, which draws together the ministries of ELCA World Hunger, Lutheran Disaster Response, AMMPARO and the ELCA's Social Ministry Organization to share knowledge, collaborate effectively, invest in new ideas and foster new opportunities for the ELCA, partners, companions and neighbors to strive together "for justice and peace in all the earth." Marie Anne holds a master's degree in international relations from the University of Chicago, and currently resides in the Chicago suburb with her husband and two children. **Register today at nepasynod.org/assembly2024/**