FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

First News First

Volume 57, Issue 7 July/August 2023

The synopsis of the 2023 Synod Assembly was not yet available as of this printing. The following is the Report of the Lower Susquehanna Bishop.

Peace be to the whole community, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace be with all who have an undying love for our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 6:23-24 NRVS

We continue to emerge from the challenging time of the pandemic. Although much of our life has returned to normal, there is still risk from COVID-19 as the prediction is currently 100,000 deaths this year. We

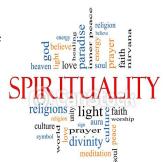


need to continue to protect the most vulnerable among us. Our congregations have moved to a new reality as some have returned to pre-pandemic levels of participation and attendance in worship, while others see declining numbers due to a concern about gathering, apathy, and deaths. At the same time, we have seen an increasing divide in our society over political issues that has at times filtered into our congregations. Cries for justice and speaking out on behalf of the poor and the marginalized, which is the call of the gospel of Jesus, has been misinterpreted as political speech and not as the gospel. We have also seen in the last several years increasing levels of hate speech and hate crimes against the marginalized in our society. This, coupled with a steady drum beat of climate disasters, has placed us in a state of agitation and trauma as a society. Yet, we remember that Jesus came into the world under an oppressive regime. He was a refugee as a child, lived in poverty, was an itinerant preacher, and was executed on fabricated charges. Still, Jesus spoke of peace and forgiveness in the Kingdom of God. His presence as God among us changed the world and continues to change it today. God is our source of hope.

One positive outcome of the pandemic was learning how much we missed being physically present in Christian community. An immense joy of this call as bishop is worshiping each Sunday in congregations throughout our synod. As we have opened back up, I have had the pleasure to be with you in your worshiping communities. To feel the presence of Christ in the word proclaimed and the sacrament shared are the core of who we are as Lutheran Christians. The time of refraining from gathering has made the importance of being in community more apparent. As we gather in person as the assembly for the first time since 2019, I rejoice in the community that we share. I pray, as did the Apostle Paul, for peace in our whole community and love with faith, from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Developing New Leaders We continue to prioritize equipping and developing existing and future leaders. We placed a renewed focus on those in the first third of life with new synod wide programs; continued support for our outdoor ministries, confirmation camps, leadership training camps, and campus ministries; and continued focus on candidacy for people called to serve as pastors and deacons. We expanded our partnership with the United Lutheran Seminary and increased access to continuing education opportunities through Kindling Faith. We concluded the 2022 Generosity Appeal for developing leaders for youth ministry and nurturing Christian community with gifts of more than \$41,000. I am incredibly grateful for the generosity of this synod.

Fostering Spiritual Wellness As challenging times continue for leaders in our synod, we continue to invest in spiritual wellness across our synod. Respite and spiritual wellness opportunities for our leaders, including programs such as our Wellness Retreat, Soul Care and Soul Feast, introduced a variety of spiritual practices that nurture deeper relationships with God and others. We have invested in retreat opportunities that respond to the spiritual needs of groups of individuals experiencing common life challenges, as well as offered unprecedented levels of individual access to spiritual and mental health care for leaders requesting assistance. Recognizing the high level of stress in ministry, we will increase our emphasis and access to resources for trauma-informed care.



<u>Interacting Authentically</u> We are a community based on Christian values guided by the clear teachings of Jesus. As we reach beyond the walls of church buildings, it is important that our Lutheran-Christian actions reflect the teachings of Jesus. Every human being is created in God's image. In all that we do in Christ's name, we promote gospel-centered hospitality that values, accepts, and loves all of God's children. Our ministries with congregations and mission starts that reach people who have been unchurched and, at times been hurt by the church, witness to the gospel. Whether it is strengthening a feeding ministry or establishing a new worshiping community, our witness matters to God and furthers the work of Christ's Kingdom here and now.

Nurturing Congregations Congregations are vital communities where ministries happen all across our synod. As synod and ELCA, our role as the larger church is to help and support congregations in proclaiming and living out the gospel. Over the past year, included in this sacred call was the guidance and completion of 31 successful call processes. To help congregations participate more fully in the mission of Christ's church, we continue to offer relevant programming and training in areas such as Hybrid Church, Building a Culture of Generosity, and Congregation Vitality Training. In the coming years, we will increase resources to our smaller congregations with fewer than 75 people worshiping on a Sunday morning. With our synod's median in-person and online worshiping attendance of 63 people, there are wonderful gifts in our smaller congregations that build a sense of community where everyone knows your name. At the same time, we recognize the challenges congregations face and hope to provide valuable resources that help smaller congregations thrive in this changing landscape.

Growing Justice Outreach During the 2016 assembly, the Lower Susquehanna Synod committed to become a Reconciling in Christ synod and later adopted our welcome statement: In the Lower Susquehanna Synod of the ELCA we feed the hungry as we have been fed by Christ. We welcome with full participation and inclusion all who are seeking God's love and grace. We welcome all because God welcomes all, regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, or relationship status. We welcome all without regard to addictions, physical or mental health, imprisonment, socio-economic circumstances,



or anything that too often divides us. Our unity is in Jesus Christ. Jesus' justice is key to our gospel understanding. Our focus in this area of our ministry, led by the Rev. Carla Christopher, is recognized as a model in the ELCA. Pastor Christopher helped other synods throughout the country prioritize justice ministry. In addition, we partnered with the Delaware-Maryland Synod to share this ministry across our synods and the region. Our Healing Justice Fund helped traditionally marginalized people receive resources to serve in the church. With the Homeless Blanket Remembrance Project on December 21, 2022, we raised the issue of housing equity at a local and national level when we blanketed the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC. The project received nationwide attention, and over 1,100 handmade quilts and blankets were distributed to people experiencing homelessness in the nation's capital and in our area locally.

Relating Globally Our synod has always had a passion for reaching out with the good news of Jesus Christ around the globe. That outreach includes sponsoring missionaries and Young Adults in Global Mission and supporting ELCA World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Response. We also continue our longstanding companionship with the Konde Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Over the last several years, our companionship has been tended by Deacon April Trout, who is serving as our synod liaison in Tanzania. Deacon Trout's role has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the limitation of



travel. She is now reconnecting congregational companionships and coordinating visits to the Konde Diocese. Last year, there was a leadership crisis in the diocese; it has been resolved with the election of new bishop, the Rev. Geoffrey Kihaba. A group of us will be traveling to visit the diocese at the end of June.

We also have two missionaries from the Lower Susquehanna Synod serving in Guatemala, Pastor Jennifer Hope-Tringali and Deacon David Hope-Tringali. They have accomplished extraordinary ministry with Tree 4 Hope in building a school for girls who may have been denied enrollment in school in Guatemala. I visited last summer and the level of achievement for these girls was astounding. Tree 4 Hope is expanding the school building to accommodate more girls who have been turned away for lack of adequate classroom space. We will be using our 2023 Lower Susquehanna Annual Generosity Appeal to sponsor a project called, "Building Up Hope" to support the school's expansion. More information will be shared with you at the assembly. In addition to expansion in Guatemala, Tree 4 Hope will open a school here on the territory of the Lower Susquehanna Synod, in partnership with our congregations in Middletown, Highspire, and Steelton. This is an example of how global outreach is mutually beneficial, both giving and receiving.

The Future In my tenth year of this call as your bishop, I am looking at key areas of focus for the coming years. We will allocate additional resources to focus on our smaller worshiping congregations and their unique gifts and challenges in these changing times. Additionally, we will deepen our intentionality to align future leaders with congregations whose pastors are retiring; as well as expand cooperation with other synods to share resources regionally; and establish administrative procedures to support a synod that needs to be leaner and more nimble.

The Team The ministries of the synod office are accomplished through the work of a small but dedicated staff who put in amazing effort to keep the details of administration of this church organized and efficient. Their leadership in the many aspects of our ministry from organizing synod events, to working with congregations, to making resources available, to stewarding the gifts given to support the ministry, and to caring for our rostered ministers, is a blessing. They are centered in a deep faith in Jesus Christ and see their work as a calling. I am grateful to minister alongside these disciples.



On the support staff, we are grateful for Marty Shifflett, who handles the requests from our Resource Center, maintains the supply pastor list, supports the Candidacy Committee, assists with small event planning and, of course, the assembly; for Kellen Michalowski, who manages our technology and video capabilities, which have become essential in this changing environment, and assists with synod communications; and in the Treasurer's Office, for Denise Ferguson and Cathy Paul, who are stewards of our synod's financial resources. The program staff includes Charlie Roberts; Deborah Clark; the Assistants to the Bishop, Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson, Deacon Marsha Roscoe, Pastor Beth Martini, and Pastor Carla Christopher; and Director for Evangelical Mission, Pastor Richard Jorgensen. They are essential to the success of the programs and the care that the Office of the Bishop provides to our congregations and rostered ministers.

Our officers, Vice President Jennifer Lau, Secretary Beth Schlegel, and Treasurer Joseph Stepansky, as well as all members of the Synod Council, oversee our mission priorities. Their partnership helps to establish clear vision and direction while ensuring that we live within the parameters of our governing documents. Their leadership facilitates the myriad of tasks required to keep our synod functioning while we focus on our gospel calling. It is joy to serve with them.

Last summer, I was blessed by the Synod Council who granted me three months of sabbatical. During that time, I traveled to Guatemala to visit Tree 4 Hope and to Austria to visit our son and his family, and vacationed with our family here in the U.S. In addition, I studied issues around the future of the church in what is called the secular age. The time away gave me the occasion to unwind, to think and pray deeply about the church, and to return refreshed to continue this call.



I feel blessed to be called to serve the church in this way. I am grateful that God has given me the opportunity to serve, and I am grateful for the love and support of the people in our synod. It is a blessing to serve alongside you for the sake of the gospel, and I look forward to gathering for the assembly. God's peace.

†The Rev. James S. Dunlop, bishop



June 25	Worship and Picnic at Greene Township Park
July 2 July 9 July 16 July 23 July 30	Holy Communion; Patriotic Music; Eucharistic Ministers The Rev. Bill Nienstedt supply pastor Holy Communion Orchestra Sunday David Hope-Tringali (Tree 4 Hope) preaching; Feree LeFevre organist
Aug. 6	Holy Communion; Eucharistic Ministers; Connie Wilkins piano
Aug. 13	Feree LeFevre organist
Aug. 20	Holy Communion; Blessing of the Backpacks, Students, and Teachers
Aug. 27	Kathleen Getaz preaching; Orchestra Sunday
Sept. 3	Bill Nienstedt supply pastor
Sept. 10	10:45 worship returns; Sunday School and Coffee Fellowship begin



Pastor Jane, Coleton, Sam, Tyler & George (Evangelical)



First Lutheran, Trinity Lutheran, St. Paul Lutheran

Thank you First Lutheran Church,

I'm learning a lot about God and Jesus. I'm having a awesome time and meeting new people. Thank you for allowing me to come here.

Coleton Rankin

Dear First Lutheran church,

Thank you for sending me to camp. I had so much fun. The best thing that happened here was meeting new people and having fun with them.

Tyler Johnson



Thank you First Lutheran Church,

Thank you for helping to fund my church camp. I'm having a great time at Camp Nawakwa. I'm learning so much about God while having fun. The pool is great and I'm meeting so many new people. I got great counselors. We got to play so many games like CTF, soccer, Uno etc. The food is great. We got so many of my favorites. I also learned abut John the Baptist, Easter and more. Our theme was faith and doubt. We got candy and I met a bunch of new people in my small group. The pool was cold but it was still fun to play water polo.

Sincerely,

Sam Nienstedt



Blessing of Students, Teachers, and Backpacks will take place at the time of the children's message on Sunday, August 20. As our students and teachers eagerly await the new year, we will ask for God's blessing upon them as they return to the classroom that their year of teaching and learning will be a meaningful one. The teachers and youth are invited to bring their backpacks or bookbags with them this day to worship.



NTT IS HOSTING THE BACK TO SCHOOL EVENT on

Saturday, August 19, 10 a.m. – noon. Thanks to the congregation for your support of this event including the socks and underwear offerings and donations collected earlier this year. Please share this information with families of elementary children who have a need for these items in preparation for school. Contact: Mary Gotwald mgotwald@embarqmail.com or 717-264-4759.



ALIVE MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT is the synod-wide retreat for 6th to 8th graders and their adult advisors. Held annually at Camp Nawakwa, this year's event is scheduled for September 22-24, 2023. Congregational groups lodge together in cabins, and attend large group gatherings with singing, interactive activities and videos, and small group conversations, led by trained staff. Along with the various learning opportunities, there are

games, campfires, free-time and lots of time for meeting and making new friends. Youth come away with some great memories, friends, and faith moments.

Adult advisors are critical in helping youth discuss what they are learning and experiencing. If you are a parent of one of our middle school youth or another adult who enjoys leading youth in their faith formation, and have an interest in being an adult advisor for the trip, please speak with Pastor Nicholson. The church will be covering the advisors costs.

The total cost per student is \$136. The \$50 non-refundable deposit is due to the church office by September 5. The church will cover the remainder of the cost. More details are available at the synod website: lss-elca.org/alive-2



LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF KITS Late July and August are the time of year to gather items for our school kits. The following are needed: black/blue ball point pens, crayons in boxes of 16/24 crayons, 70 sheet notebooks and pencil sharpeners. A list of items and collection box will be placed outside the office later in the summer. Thank you for being a part of this Lutheran World Relief Project.



2024 ELCA

including

ELCA YOUTH GATHERING

The youth gathering will be taking place in New Orleans from July 16-20, Youth Gathering place in New Orleans from July 16 2024. Theme: Created to Be. The gathering is open to those who have completed 9th - 12th grade by summer 2024. Please talk with Pastor Young Adult Gathering Nicholson by August 27, 2023 if you have an interest in attending.

Tree-4-Hope/Guatemala



First Lutheran in in partnership with Tree-4-Hope Girl's School in Guatemala and is helping to build classroom space through our financial gifts to the school. Deacon David Hope-Tringali will be joining us for worship on July 30 at 9:30 to update us on the ministry in Guatemala. Also a group from First is considering visiting Guatemala next February. If you Tree 4 Hope have an interest in learning more about this trip, please be in touch with Rose Wilson.



The Evangelism Committee is pleased to announce that a new congregational photo directory will be created this Fall. It has been eight years since our last directory was published so we are excited about producing a new updated one!

We need ALL church members to participate so that we may create the most accurate and up-todate directory possible. Please save the dates of Monday, September 18, and Tuesday, September 19. All pictures will be taken on-site at the

church on those two dates. Appointment times and how to schedule yours will be announced later this summer.

Each household that is photographed and attends a proofing session will receive a free 8 x 10 photo as well as a free photo directory. No purchase is required but you must attend the proofing session after your picture is taken. This session is where you will choose which photo you want for your free 8 x 10 as well as which photo you want used in the directory. Should you decide to purchase photos, we have been told you will receive them in time to give as Christmas gifts.

Our directories are being published by Re:Member Church Directories of North Carolina. They will be similar in format to our last directory. We will also be receiving a private online version that can be periodically updated.

The Evangelism Committee thanks you in advance for your support of this important project which we feel will help better acquaint our members with one another!





Second Graders, John Sekel and Lenora Craven completed the Holy Communion class and received first communion this spring. Our congregation celebrated with them on May 7, 2023.

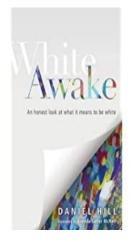
On May 20, 2023 Kathleen Getaz, the previous Director of Faith Formation at First Lutheran, graduated with her Master of Divinity Degree from Princeton Seminary. Kathleen is going to be continuing her schooling to acquire a Master of Social Work degree from Princeton in May 2024. Then during the 2024-2025 school year she we be doing her internship in preparation to be ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.





Nancy Hamilton and Pastor Jane Nicholson were both in attendance on this glorious day.

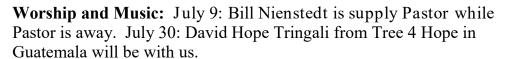
Kathleen will be preaching God's Word and visiting us here at First on Sunday, August 27, 2023. We hope you will be able to be here to greet her on that day.



WHITE AWAKE An Honest Look at What It Means to be White. This fall, Joyce Ray will facilitate a discussion on this book. Author, Daniel Hill, will never forget the day he heard these words: "Daniel, you may be white, but don't let that lull you into thinking you have no culture. White culture is very real. In fact, when white culture comes in contact with other cultures, it almost always wins. So it would be a really good idea for you to learn about your culture." Confused and unsettled by this encounter, Hill began a journey of understanding his own white identity. Hill is a pastor in Chicago. Through his writing, he does a beautiful job of interweaving these ethical, social, and theological issues as he brings us along on his journey of understanding. Please be in touch with Joyce if you would like her to order a book for you or you may order your own. The class will be on Sundays at 9:30 beginning mid-September for 5-6 weeks.

COUNCIL HIGHLIGHTS

Property Committee: The floor in the office has been repaired and the carpet ordered at a cost of \$1,096.62. The air conditioner in Fellowship Hall needs a replacement for the actuator and the controller to better cool the room. The cost is \$2,586.



Social Missions: The 2024 trip to Guatemala is on hold.

Evangelism: Re-Member, a photo directory company will be taking pictures of our members for a church directory on Sept 18 and 19. A \$600. donation was pledged to help with the cost.

Administration: The July Council Meeting has been canceled, if a vote is needed, an e-mail or zoom meeting will take place.

Pastor's Report: She shared the Synod Assembly highlights and Southgate progress.

WELCA





The 34th Annual Convention of the Lower Susquehanna Synod Women of the ELCA will be held on August 18-19 at Swamp Lutheran Church, Reinholds, PA. The theme is "Shepherd Me, O God," and features of the event will include a banquet, Eucharist, workshops and a craft table. Gift cards from Giant, Weis, Aldi and Walmart will be collected for use at the Gettysburg campus of United Lutheran Seminary in their food pantry. During the business

sessions the Election of president, treasurer and board members will be take place. Registration for both voting members and participants must be made by July 17. Lodging will be arranged with the Comfort Inn. See Nancy Fricke or Janet Friend for necessary forms.

\mathbf{WELCA}



BOARD MEETING

Arrangements for programming for the coming year will be made at the Board Meeting on Wednesday, August 9 at 11:00 a.m.



The Women's Fellowship Breakfast

will be held at Bob Evans at 8:30 a.m. on Wednesday, July 19 and at 30 West on August 16. **ALL LADIES ARE WELCOME.**

STEWARDSHIP NOTES

Special offerings for the months of July and August are designated for Lutheran World Hunger. One project which benefits from our offerings is the Rice Street Gardens in St. Paul, Minnesota, which is the second-largest community garden in the state, with over 250 plots for local families. Your generosity to ELCA World Hunger, paired with the hard work of gardeners and volunteers, enables this garden to thrive. Each gardener contributes by volunteering during the year, keeping it clean and well-organized, and donating money to buy supplies. But they are growing more than food – they are planting seeds for the kind of world God wants for us, a world where everyone has enough to eat. Thank you for your continued support of the World Hunger program.

"We are commanded to love God and our neighbor equally, without difference. We don't have to look for opportunities to fill this command, they're all around us, 24 hours a day. You must open your eyes wide, so that you can see the opportunities to give free service, wholehearted, right where you are, in your family. If you don't give such service to your family, you will not be able to give it to those outside your home." Mother Teresa

SPIRITRUST LUTHERAN



The SpiriTrust Lutheran

Auxiliary is selling discount cards as a fundraiser. The money raised from selling these cards is used to help such programs as Hospice, Home Care, and The Inn. The cost is \$5.00. The card is active now through September 1, 2024. They may be used for discounts at various businesses in the area. If you are interested in purchasing a card and supporting these programs, please see Tudy Gates or call (717) 264-6312. Thanks for your support!

NEIGHBORHOOD TASK TEAM

Sharing God's love in our community

June 11, 2023 Laundry Event

Spot Laundromat now offers cards for the fees to wash and dry laundry. \$8.25 was put on each card that we gave out to our neighbors on June11. If a balance remains on the card it can be used another time.

Little Daisy's Closet and First Lutheran Church teamed up to purchase the Spot cards to give to those who need help with laundry expenses.



The event was advertised on Face Book as well as with local agencies that help our neighbors. In a short time 35 cards were given out. Thankfully, we had some paper tickets, provided by Spot that we could give out for a free wash.

Thanks to the volunteers from First and Little Daisy's Closet that shared God's love through conversation, a laundry card, detergent and dryer sheets, water bottle and children's books.

Thanks to all who support this ministry and to Spot laundromat personnel for assistance in this outreach.



A Big Thank You to the congregation for your generous donations of socks and financial support for the purchase of socks. The socks and underwear will be shared with our neighbors at the Back To School Event which will be held on August 19th. This event is for elementary school students. More details will be forth coming after the shopping is complete. This means so much to these children to have NEW socks and underwear to start their school year. You are all welcomed to volunteer or visit this event.

THANK YOU

Dear Members of First Lutheran,

Just wanted to express my gratitude for all the prayers, cards, and well wishes after my emergency surgery in late May and my two subsequent hospitalizations. I believe your prayers for healing were heard because I am now feeling much better! A special thanks to Pastor Nicholson for taking the time to visit me in Hershey as well as at home and bringing those beautiful flowers. May God bless you all!



With Sincere Appreciation, Kristv Nienstedt

Dear First Lutheran Family,

I would like to thank everyone who helped our family with monetary gifts, and all the support and love given during Jim's illness and death. I am also very thankful for everyone who was there for me during the first year without him, not sure I would have gotten through the last year without all of you.



Thankful, Mary Beth

HELPING HANDS

Council

President: Tim Gotwald Vice President: Joyce Ray Secretary: Rose Wilson Treasurer: Sally Herritt Pastor: Jane Nicholson Deacon: Freda Dorand Jeff Dorand Barb Evans Marlin Maclay Mary Beth McGraw-Warne Gerry Wilson Financial Secretary: Carol McCoy



Deadline for The September Newsletter will be August 15

PRAYER CHAIN

May we include you in our prayers? Do you have a prayer need that we can help you with? If so, please call our prayer chain group leader: Marcia Hunt@

717-263-0781

Names are kept on the prayer chain for 1 month. After that month, please contact the office again if you would like to have a name on for another month.

Trevor Plasterer	7/2	Gage Boock	7/24
Peyton Buselli	7/3	Nancy George	7/24
Cameron Stouffer	7/5	Shirley Leister	7/24
Liam Coy	7/6	Joyce Ray	7/24
Nancy Wildeson	7/6	Gabrielle Saylor	7/24
Jeffrey Diehl	7/9	James Sloan II	7/24
Madison Wenger	7/14	Ann Chocha	7/26
Emersyn Plasterer	7/18	Donald Mayer	7/28
Mason Boswell	7/19	John Shupp	7/28
Mark Nicholson	7/21	Carl Holt	7/29
Jodi Wilson	7/21	Frank Buselli	7/31
Margery Lau	7/23	Brynn Sekel	7/31





Collin Hammond	8/5 Steven Schumacher	8/20
Christian Burkholder	8/7 Kimberly Brown	8/21
Catherine Craven	8/7 Susan Rote	8/22
Jeffrey Goodman	8/7 Dalton Paul	8/25
Gary Fleegal	8/11 Kira Coy	8/26
Douglas Pheil	8/11 Colin Hefner	8/26
Kenley Craven	8/15 Mitchell Wilson	8/26
Marianne Kennedy	8/16 Georgann Overcash	n 8/28
Christopher Lau	8/18 Tracey Savary	8/29
Michael Dent	8/19 Sloan Huber	8/31
Judith Etter	8/20 Carol Leach	8/31

FIRST EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Website: www.felcc.org

@First Evangelical Luther an Church

@felccyouth

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Church Office Hours
Monday-Thursday
9 a.m.-1 p.m.

CHURCH OFFICE 717-264-2015

Parish Administrator ext. 1
Director of Music ext. 3
Pastor ext. 4

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JOIN US FOR

Worship with Holy Communion & Patriotic Music Sunday, July 2 at 9:30 a.m.

