

# SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

## Learning Ministries Day Something for Everyone

Saturday, January 29, 2017

Mindfulness. Faith, sexism and justice. Youth worship planning. Faith in the public life. Luther and science. Adult Bible studies. The changing church. Creation care in the church. A Bible study on Revelation. Confirmation. Healing the wounds of racism. Service learning. Reforming Sunday school.

### Growing in Faith



These are just a few of the themes for this year's Learning Ministries Day, "Growing in Faith: Always [Re]Forming,"

to be held at St. Peter Lutheran Church in Bethlehem on Saturday, January 29. Registration begins at 8:30 AM, and the day concludes at 3:00 PM. Workshops will be offered both in the morning and afternoon.

The keynote speaker is Beth Lewis, President and CEO of 1517 Media (formerly Augsburg Fortress). Through December 31, the cost for the event per person is \$30 (includes lunch). After that date, the cost will be \$45.

For more information and to register, visit the synod website at <http://nepasynod.org> (under the events tab). Information was also in the synod mailing this month. Or you may contact Karen Matthias-Long at [karen@nepasynod.org](mailto:karen@nepasynod.org) or 610-266-5101.

## Reading Lutheran Parish God's Work. Our Hands. Sunday



On Sunday morning, September 11, members and rostered leaders of the Reading Lutheran Parish (RLP), a partnership of the 12 congregations and one synodically authorized worshipping community in Reading, came together to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the 2001 attacks and to participate in the ELCA's "God's Work. Our Hands." emphasis.

The day began with the Lutheran community supporting the Reading Fire Department in its annual remembrance of first responders who lost their lives on 9-11-2001. The Rev. Peggy Wuertele, ministry coordinator of the ELCA's Region 7, spoke about her memories of the day. At the time she served as a pastor in Queens. A joint RLP choir sang *Amazing Grace* just before 10:00 a.m., the time when a plane crashed into the second of the Twin Towers.

Following the Fire Department observance, nearly 200 Lutherans along with visitors from the community remained for a joint worship service. Pr. Wuertele's sermon focused on forgiveness in the midst of grief. The day of remembrance and service continued with a picnic lunch and several service projects, including the assembly of personal care kits for guests at Opportunity House, a local shelter. The day's offering was contributed to *The Battle of the Badges*, a scholarship program for children of police and fire fighters.

## Meet Synod Support Staff



Laurie Christman

Laurie is the receptionist at The Lutheran Center; and as such, hers is the first voice you usually hear when you call.

Her most time-consuming duty is to arrange for supply pastors for nearly 40 congregations without a regularly called pastor. At times this can be a real challenge!

Laurie also tracks the Annual Congregational Reports. She records online any paper copies submitted to the synod office, and she then downloads all the reports to the synod's server.

In addition to all the above, she maintains the synod calendar; so please contact her if you want something scheduled.

Laurie has worked in church positions for 30 years. She started at the synod office in 1984, and later worked for the ELCA disaster response team. When that office relocated to Chicago, she joined the staff at St. John's Allentown. 13 years later she rejoined the synod staff in her present position. Laurie and her husband, Rodney, have two adult sons, and are members at Hope, Cherryville.

## “Beer and Hymns” Brings Praise to Public Spaces



Last November, historic Trinity Lutheran in downtown Reading began offering “Beer and Hymns” events at local pubs and restaurants. About every other month at various venues, participants gather together to sing songs of faith, share a meal, and raise a glass in the finest Lutheran tradition.

Hymn sheets are provided and various accompanists lead sets of 3-4 hymns, providing opportunities between sets for everyone to eat, drink and visit. There is no preaching or proselytizing at “Beer and Hymns”.

Trinity's senior pastor, Alan Wolkenhauer, established a similar event with his previous congregation in Dunedin, Florida. He says that “Beer and Hymns” gives members an opportunity to invite friends, neighbors, and family members to experience a Christian community that is fun-loving, open and welcoming.

He has found that people are often more willing to invite and to accept an invitation to an event like “Beer and Hymns” than they would be for a typical church gathering. Events in Reading have averaged about 80 participants from over a dozen different churches, as well as guests who are unaffiliated with any church.

Pastor Wolkenhauer's favorite “Beer and Hymns” experience is that of a young gay man who said at an event in Florida, “I haven't been to church for over ten years and I thought that God hated me. Tonight was the first time in a very long time that I really experienced the love of God.”

“Beer and Hymns” in Reading is co-sponsored by Trinity's covenant partner, Christ Episcopal Church. The next event: “Beer and Christmas Carols,” will be held on Tuesday, December 13 at GNA Restaurant in West Reading. Follow the Facebook page “Beer and Hymns Reading” for more photos and information.