

SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

Learning Ministries Day

Held on Saturday, January 27, at Christ Hamilton United in Stroudsburg, this year's theme was: "Church as Wonder-Land."

Pr. David Danneberger led the opening worship and welcomed attendees to a day that included a keynote address, workshops, meals, and time to share ideas and excitement.

Keynote speaker Pr. Lori Kochanski (former NEPS Pastor and Assistant to the Bishop) spoke about "Transforming Faith Communities from 'Places to Go for Answers' to 'Places to be with the Big Questions.'"

Afternoon workshops included Special Needs Ministries, Caring for Creation, and Wonder: "Godly Wonder," "Science and Wonder," and "Wonderful Crafts."

An offering raised \$625 for scholarships to Bear Creek Camp.

Learning Ministries Day 2019 will be Saturday, January 26, at Jerusalem, Schuylkill Haven. Save the date!



Inside Outside Gift Giving



Caren (not her real name) told Pastor Sue Ruggles of St. John, Easton that her daughter has trouble with an addiction and is incarcerated. While her daughter is in jail, Caren cares for her children, trying to keep them together in one house. Christmas is especially hard because there is not enough money. This is just one of many stories told in December.

Members of St. John downtown historic Easton, one block from the Northampton County jail, believe the children should not be punished because of their parent's mistakes or addictions. So every year, those inside the jail can request their family members receive gifts. This year, St. John expanded their work and filled the requests from 56 people inside the jail. Over 150 children received gifts that were wrapped and deemed age appropriate.

Toys for Tots helps with some of the toys; and a Thrivent Action Team Grant helps with the rest, including mailing seven packages for families out of the area. Children received love and prayers for every gift wrapped, and the caregivers who picked presents up were able to share their stories and receive encouragement. "Inside Outside Gift Giving" enables parents inside the jail to show children outside the jail they are loved while someone is trying again.

Talking About Racism

The White Privilege Conference April 4-7, 2018

In 2016 the Youth, Young Adult, and Family Ministry Team of the Synod received a grant to help young people learn about racism, and how they could help heal the wounds of racism. Several of them attended the "White Privilege Conference" which was held in Philadelphia. The next conference will be held in Grand Rapids, Michigan, April 4-7, 2018. Take a team of folks from your congregation. For more information visit: whiteprivilegeconference.com.

ORGANIZATION - Race Forward

Taken from their website:

"Race Forward's mission is to build awareness, solutions, and leadership for racial justice by generating transformative ideas, information, and experiences. We define racial justice as the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all; and we work to advance racial justice through media, research, and leadership development."

Check out their website at raceforward.org for all kinds of resources including links to training. A small group of youth and adults from our synod attended a training event in 2016 and found it helpful.

Evacuees to PA following Maria: LCS Helps Congregations Connect



Like many before who have sought refuge with friends and family following disaster, over 2,500 people have evacuated from the Caribbean to Pennsylvania following Hurricane Maria. As of mid-January, the number of displaced students in the Allentown school district was 367; in Reading, 229; and in Bethlehem, 160. There are also displaced students in Hazelton, Scranton, Wilkes Barre, and other places.

Because of support from strong Hispanic communities here, many families are becoming self-sufficient quickly. There are some circumstances, however, where the most vulnerable have significant needs, especially related to housing. LCS is seeking to be an ally to organizations and churches who are caring for newcomers. Some of the efforts underway include:

- Supporting the Reading Lutheran Parish in hosting Camp Noah this summer. Camp Noah is a disaster camp developed through the Lutheran Disaster Response network to support children recovering from disaster.
- Forming partnerships with Lutheran leaders who are leading outreach efforts to families who are providing temporary housing to friends and family from Puerto Rico.
- Helping congregations connect with the most vulnerable families in their communities in order to help them with rental assistance and other support.
- Working with Pennsylvania Emergency Management, FEMA, and other faith based and disaster organizations to coordinate efforts for helping people make decisions for their families.

Interested in learning more about Camp Noah or other ways to support those affected by Hurricane Maria? Contact Julia Menzo at 267-464-7740 or jmenzo@libertylutheran.org.

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