

SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

A New Ministry Partnership



Joint choir under the direction of Geert Ruelens

On December 1, 2016, Nativity and St. Paul, Reading, entered into a ministry partnership when they agreed to share Geert Ruelens as their musician. On Monday evening, both choirs rehearse together; and in 2017 the two congregations joined in celebrating Epiphany and Ascension (to which they invited the community); and they worshiped together on Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and for the Easter Vigil.

When Nativity's interim pastor, Cathy Feil, received a call, St. Paul and Nativity saw an opportunity to deepen their partnership. They entered into fruitful discussions about sharing a pastor, guided by the Holy Spirit and Associate of the Bishop, Rev. John C. Richter. On August 1 St. Paul's pastor, Carol B. Kehler, began serving also at Nativity after an agreement was reached to purchase time from St. Paul. On August 6, Pastor Richter offered prayers for the beginning of a new ministry at Nativity.

Congregational leaders join in Worship and Music Committee meetings as well as in a quarterly Council meeting to evaluate the ongoing partnership. Members have four weekly opportunities for Worship, two for Bible study, and share Eucharistic ministers. The congregations look forward to sharing both another Epiphany celebration as well as an Advent 4 service on December 24 (for which a bell choir will be formed).

Between Nativity and St. Paul, 74 families received a Thanksgiving basket containing a full meal, prayerfully offered by the congregations. As the congregations look to influence each other in the best of ways, St. Paul has adopted Nativity's yearly Women's Thankoffering and Nativity members have contributed food, clothing, and household donations to St. Paul's monthly Food Pantry. St. Paul and Nativity will continue trusting in God's guidance as they look to the future together.

Second Annual Parish Secretaries' Christmas Lunch

On Tuesday, December 12, the synod support staff hosted the 2nd Annual Parish Secretaries' Christmas Lunch. All NEPS congregations were encouraged to treat their parish secretaries to a time of fellowship and a catered lunch. The group had an opportunity to ask questions of the synod's support staff, play some Christmas games, make new friends, and reconnect with old friends.



Talking About Racism

WHITE PRIVILEGE CONFERENCE

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." The next conference will be held in Grand Rapids, Michigan from April 4-April 7, 2018. Take a team of folks from your congregation (<http://www.whiteprivilegeconference.com/wpc.html>).

ORGANIZATION: Race Forward

"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." (<https://www.raceforward.org>).

The vision statement: "Race Forward envisions a vibrant world in which people of all races create, share and enjoy resources and relationships equitably, unleashing individual potential, embracing collective responsibility and generating global prosperity. We strive to be a leading values-driven social justice enterprise where the culture and commitment created by our multi-racial and diverse staff supports individual and organizational excellence and sustainability."

St. Paul, White Haven Community Lunch Program



St. Paul, White Haven is a small church in a small town; but church members and helpful friends serve approximately 3,400 meals a year to anyone who stops by for lunch on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.

The church's Community Lunch Program has been in place for years; but in 2014 Sherry Legg, St. Paul's Secretary, thought the community needed a communal celebration - a free Thanksgiving dinner. Encouraged by commitments from an informal social media poll, Sherry organized her husband and their four kids, her parents, extended family and friends, and they served 163 guests for dinner on Thanksgiving Eve.

Billed as The Second Annual White Haven Community Thanksgiving Dinner, the 2015 event attracted nearly 200 guests in a raging snowstorm that knocked out power briefly, panicking the kitchen workers.



By 2016, with 258 guests, the event had truly become a community tradition. The high school Key Club showed up to help, St. Patrick's RCC members roasted turkeys, and Boy and Girl Scouts helped set up and decorate. The local ambulance crew delivered meals to shut-ins, and the

Lions Club wrote a check. This year the White Haven Market donated turkeys, and Thrivent sent a donation.

The 2017 guest numbers grew to 317, which is nearly 30 percent of the population of White Haven.

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Second Annual Parish Secretaries' Christmas Lunch

On Tuesday, December 12, the synod support staff hosted the Second Annual Parish Secretaries' Christmas Lunch at The Lutheran Center.

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The leftover food was donated to the Lehigh Conference of Churches.