

PARTNERS IN  
*the spirit*  
NOVEMBER 2006



The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod

## LIFT: An Event for All!

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Response to Katrina Continues: Truck  
Transports Supplies to Biloxi

Check out Project Connect!

Crossroads:  
Transforming Events with Youth (TEY)

Summer Theological Academy:  
Transforming Events with Youth (TEY)

Smoke Church Celebrates 250 Years



Big plans are underway for a first-time-ever event for all members of congregations in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod!

Mark your calendars now to attend the **LIFT** (Lutherans in Faith Together) event at Muhlenberg College on Saturday, June 9, 2007.

This is an event for all ages. Bring your families and participate in activities that will “lift” up your faith and make connections with other Lutherans in the 293 congregations that make up our Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

The day begins with a walk/run for World Hunger (if you’re so inclined).

The main event begins at 9:00 a.m. in the Sports Center on the Muhlenberg campus. There’ll be singing with the “**Bread for the Journey**” group, followed by an opening prayer and welcome by Bishop David Strobel. The keynote speaker is **Bart Campolo**, whose message will inspire and challenge us all.

You can read more about Bart on the **LIFT** page on this [website](#).

One of our special visitors at LIFT is storyteller **Tracy**



**Radosevic.** Tracy is a dynamic, energetic, internationally acclaimed storyteller, educator, and retreat facilitator. She brings her special brand of humor, insight, and faith to audiences of all ages through the power of narrative.

You can read more about Tracy on the [LIFT page](#) on this [website](#).

Special activities for children, games for families, forums for everyone, concerts in the Muhlenberg chapel, conversations with famous Lutherans – all this and more awaits you!

Check out the news about the LIFT event on the synod [website](#). Visit often – updates are posted frequently. Check there, too, for information about registration.

Plan now to bring the whole family!



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By Pastor Mary Gade (Ziegels Lutheran Church, Breinigsville) and Linda Deibert (member, Ziegels United Church of Christ Church, Breinigsville)

*I would have liked to write each of you a personal note to thank you for the role you played in supporting and encouraging the donations to the truck to Biloxi. Since I am preparing to leave for Biloxi on Saturday, that just will not be possible ... please let the congregations of your district know that they made a huge difference.*

Pastor Mary Gade wrote those words in a note to mission district deans on Thursday, October 26, two days before she left to travel to Biloxi once again to assist with Katrina cleanup.

Pastor Gade and members of Ziegels Union Church had teamed up with synod congregations, community members, and businesses to provide supplies for Katrina flood victims through Bethel Lutheran Church in Biloxi, MS.

Transportation was provided by Dennis Rothermel, a member of the Lutheran congregation at Ziegels, who drove his new tractor and a trailer provided by Roadway Trucking to the site.

Rothermel had worked for Roadway for many years and the run to Biloxi was his final trip prior to his retirement. The tractor was a gift from Roadway for having over 2,000,000 miles of accident-free driving. His name and "2,000,000"



was printed on the side of the rig. Giving his time was his gift to the project.

Lutheran Congregational Services established drop sites at churches throughout the synod. Not only were countless items donated but also over \$3,000 to be used for trip expenses. Volunteers began packing boxes of items the week prior to the trip. Donations were received from Nestle, Kraft Food, Bill Steward Shipping Dept., and Faith Evangelical Free Church in Wescosville.

"It was more than clear that this effort would not have been possible without the efforts of all our churches working together," writes Pastor Gade. "It was amazing to see the supplies arrive all week. We had various people coming and going to sort and re-pack the items so that they would be 'truck ready' on Sunday. When the items started piling up it became more and more clear that we would meet our goal of filling the truck to the top!"

Rothermel left Ziegels at 4 a.m. on October 16 and arrived in Biloxi on October 17. He noted that when the back of the truck was opened, there were tears of joy. The supplies it held meant that the members and volunteers at Bethel Lutheran would be able to continue their ministry within the community. He felt that the tears were because "they never anticipated it being filled from floor to ceiling with necessities for the Katrina victims."

Pastor Gade notes that it was a "group effort of all of our members, the many churches that gave, the churches that served as drop sites and kindly transported the stuff here, and the community members who gave both items and dollars to make it happen.

"It was an amazing time to see it all come together. It is moments like this when it is simply amazing to be the Church."

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Project Connect is a groundbreaking effort by the Eastern Cluster of Lutheran Seminaries (Gettysburg, Philadelphia, and Southern) to involve young adults in discerning a call to public ministry in the church. Thanks to a \$3 million grant from the Lily Endowment, the project will run for several years and reach out in all sorts of ways.

Project Connect makes connections between young adults and a network of partners — seminaries, colleges, camps, campus ministries, church leaders, social ministry organizations, and volunteer organizations. The purpose is to engage this network in mentoring and providing theologically sound vocational discernment programs for college-age adults.

This endeavor will be accomplished by **identifying** young adults who are active in church life; **nurturing** relationships with those who are open to a process that extends, deepens, and provides focus for vocational discernment; and **sustaining** these relationships by providing profound experiences in congregational ministry.

The project [website](#) provides an overview of the project as well as information for students and leaders, a listing of upcoming events, stories from young adults about their call to ministry in the church, links to other partners, and grant information.



Upcoming events include seminary days at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia November 12-14, "Connect the Dots: Calling Young Adult Leaders for a Changing World," a retreat for young adults ages 18-30 January 2-5, 2007, and "Hearing God's Call," a discernment retreat. Two of the latter events are scheduled in early 2007: January 5-7 in Highland Lake, NY, and January 7-9 in Jefferson, MD.

Project Director **Don Johnson** is excited about the prospect of being in touch with potential candidates as well as church leaders who can help identify such candidates. There's even a secure online database where pastors and rostered leaders can enter contact information for young people from their churches who might be interested.

Pastor Fred Opalinski, **Trinity Lutheran Church, Reading**, is our synod discernment advocate for 2006-2007. As such, he will mentor a number of youth and young adults who have expressed interest in ministry in the church and make presentations at various events on behalf of Project Connect. You may contact Pastor Opalinski at [fopalinski@oldtrinity.org](mailto:fopalinski@oldtrinity.org) or 610-374-4861.

(Ed. Note: In addition to the Project Connect website, Linda Lovell's blog for on the Delaware-Maryland Synod [website](#) provided some of this information. Linda also wrote an article about Project Connect for the November 2006 issue of The Lutheran. [Click here to read the article.](#))

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“My life, and the way I look at it, has definitely changed, thanks to TEY.” (Samantha Wood, Trinity, Pottsville)

Young people of Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod are changed because of the Spirit’s stirring in the two summer retreat events of **Theological Education with Youth (TEY)**. Samantha Wood and 11 other high school juniors and seniors from Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod are changed — and are changing their congregations and the world.

The one week **Crossroads Event**, held June 18-24 and hosted at the **Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg**, included Samantha Wood and five other youth from Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod: Arielle Bazulka (St. Paul, Easton), Danielle Boehm (St. John, Sinking Spring), Derek Price (Friedens, Oley), Kaiti Sippel (Trinity, Pottsville) and Chelsea Wertz (Trinity, Pottsville).

The event was centered in lively community on the Gettysburg campus, with worship, play, and shared meals as well as creative theological exploring of the baptismal calling to “do justice, love mercy and walk humbly with God” (Micah 6).

Then Crossroads hit the road to York, Pa., for an immersion day focused on advocacy; to Washington, DC, for an in-depth experience of homelessness and biblical hospitality; to Baltimore, Md., for eye-opening discoveries about the church’s ministries of international relief and development;



and to a life-care facility in Gettysburg, Pa., to learn about ministries of compassion and community.

Commenting on the immersion experience at **Luther Place** in Washington, which included an evening meal with women in transition, Arielle marveled at how “people without homes or money were praying for me like I was the only thing that mattered.” Derek reported that Crossroads helped him discover that “the Church is more than just Sunday services and prayer — it’s about taking action, and serving and seeking social justice.” Danielle celebrated the way that the small group gatherings for reflection throughout the event “became like family, and a kind of safety net” for her.

The primary theme of the Crossroads Event is vocation — specifically, the baptismal calling to take part in God’s new creation by “striving for justice and peace in all the earth,” and the many ministries and roles through which that work is done. For Samantha, God’s voice was amazingly powerful: “I found myself being called in ways that I could never imagine.”

### **Synod Provides Grants**

For the fourth consecutive year, Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod provided \$100 scholarships for each of the 12 participants in the two TEY summer retreat events, the **Crossroads Event** and the **Summer Theological Academy**. The Rev. Bill Bixby, Director of TEY, celebrates this strong relationship as a cornerstone of the project’s mission. “Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod is deeply committed to nurturing the faith and leadership of teen disciples, and doing so in a way that takes theology and the powers of young people seriously,” he notes. “Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod and TEY are full partners in this ministry which transforms young people, congregations and youth ministries, and the world.”

Information and images of these TEY summer retreat events, including prospective dates for 2007, are available at the project website, <http://tey.easterncluster.org>. Also available there are descriptions and registration options for the one day **Affirmation of Baptism Festivals** in November for ninth grade youth.



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The seventh **Summer Theological Academy** gathered 19 rising high school seniors, called “scholars,” from nine synods at the campus of **Susquehanna University** from July 22 to August 5.

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod was well represented by six leaders from five congregations: Nathan Derr (Friedens, Oley), Jenifer Moore (Christ, Jim Thorpe), Gabe Newman (St. Paul, Easton), Ally Schneeberger-Klotz (St. John, Jim Thorpe), Karen Ward (Trinity, Pottsville) and Samantha Wertz (Trinity, Pottsville).

Creative and challenging courses in theology, daily Morning and Evening Prayer, servant learning with an urban congregation, workshops on vocation, and ministries in the arts are at the heart of this empowering community.

For Ally, “This was an experience that is once-in-a-lifetime. We learned so much about ourselves and about God’s love that you just can’t sit still — it makes you want to help others see God, too.”

The strong emphasis on high-quality theology was a refreshing surprise to Nate Derr: “I found I can be very theologically minded if I try to be.”

The Academy’s servant learning focused on congregational and community ministries engaging the continuing



challenges of HIV/AIDS, in partnership with [St. Luke Lutheran Church in Williamsport, Pa.](#) Biblical and practical preparation and debriefing took place at Susquehanna, co- led by the pastors of St. Luke, [the Revs. Anke and Eric Deibler.](#)

In the city, the congregation hosted a “holy conversation” among Academy scholars and staff, joined by persons allied with and served by AIDS Resource of Williamsport. In small teams, the group conducted a neighborhood survey of attitudes and public policies addressing AIDS.

In addition, a group of Academy scholars produced an original panel for the national AIDS quilt, in thanksgiving for the life and witness of a St. Luke member, Dennis. “By the examples of those living with HIV/AIDS, I see that the simplest story can change someone’s life and strengthen their faith forever. That’s how Jesus worked,” observed Jenifer Moore.

Many youth participants echoed the comments of Sami Wertz, who said, “What’s distinctive about the Academy is the freedom given to us, and the level of respect granted to us, and how we were gently pushed to challenge ourselves ...”

**Note:** The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod supports these events through scholarships. [See more at the end of the article about Crossroads.](#)

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BEFORE 1917



By the Rev. Elna Stratton, pastor, St. Paul Lutheran and New Jerusalem Zion United Church of Christ Shared Ministry, Hamburg

*(Ed. Note: Pastor Elna Stratton was raised in Connecticut but began her ministry in the Dallas, Texas, area, where she spent 22 years. Before coming to New Jerusalem Zion and St. Paul's, she served an ELCA congregation in Schuylkill County. In November 2004, she was called to work with the congregations of St. Paul Lutheran and New Jerusalem Zion United Church of Christ to formalize the shared ministry agreement.)*

Throughout 2006, St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran ("Smoke") Church of Hamburg has been celebrating 250 years of ministry at the church's location in Windsor Township, northern Berks County.

Many events have been held during this 250th year to celebrate the occasion. Former pastors have returned to preach and reminisce; members in period costumes marched in the Oct. 28 King Frost Parade in Hamburg; and Pastor Guy Grube led a Pennsylvania German service on Oct. 29. A banquet will be held on Nov. 11.

The culmination of the year's activities will be the special anniversary service on Sunday, November 5, 2006, at 2:30 p.m. The guest preacher that afternoon will be **Jon Pahl**, Professor of the History of Christianity in North America at the **Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia** and currently a Fellow in the **Center for the Study of Religion at Princeton University**.



It all began on November 6, 1756, when the Rev. Daniel Shumacker dedicated the log church built on land granted by William Penn's son, John. Originally known as Lebanon Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Lutherans were joined by a Reformed congregation in 1826 and plans were made to erect the stone church which is still in use today. The Union church was renamed St. Paul's when the new edifice was dedicated in 1832.

In 1930, the Lutheran congregation became part of a three-point Lutheran parish. In 1964, St. Paul's Reformed (now UCC) congregation dissolved, and St. Paul's again became a Lutheran church.

### **A Shared Ministry**

In 2005, St. Paul's Lutheran Church entered into a shared ministry arrangement with New Jerusalem Zion UCC of Greenwich Township, about nine miles away. Both of these congregations were experiencing financial stress and considered shared ministry as an alternative to lessen the financial burden on the two smaller congregations. The joint study committee also considered that shared ministry could bring new life to special services, youth ministry, and fellowship activities.

Because of the physical separation of the two facilities and the fact that they serve somewhat different communities (New Jerusalem Zion serves the greater Kutztown area and St. Paul's the Hamburg area), each maintains its own governing and committee structure. However, they have established a Shared Ministry Board with members from both congregations. In most recent times, they have begun to share in special services, including Lenten services, Thanksgiving and an early Christmas Eve service structured for families with younger children.

### **Why "Smoke" Church?**

A curious thing about St. Paul's is that it has been known for centuries now as "Smoke Church." Numerous legends are claimed as the reason, but no one seems able to prove one theory as most accurate. Did smoke from the fireplace chimney escape through the chinks between the logs? Did the men keep their pipes lit while waiting for the circuit preacher? Was there a smokehouse out back? Was it the

wraith-like fog that can arise from the valleys in the area?  
Was it even because the first structure was burned down in  
1763 by the Lenape Indians?

If anyone knows, please share your information with the  
congregation!

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