

PARTNERS IN
the spirit
JULY 2008

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The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod

Holy Spirit Launches
Rejoicing Spirits Ministry



With lots of singing, clapping, peace-passing and joy, the **Rejoicing Spirits Ministry** was launched on February 10, 2008, at the **Lutheran Church of the Holy Spirit** in Emmaus.

Rejoicing Spirits is a worship and fellowship ministry for persons with developmental disabilities, their families and their caregivers. It provides an opportunity for persons who have often been left out of worship in their own churches to worship in joyful and noisy freedom.

The first service was gifted with the worship leadership of several persons who have developmental disabilities – and their excitement was contagious. Laughter, tears, and expressions of holy joy filled the sanctuary. Praise songs were literally shouted to the rafters.

The response from the congregation has been phenomenal. Not only do they come out the second Sunday of each month for the service, many, many members volunteer each month - greeting the Rejoicers (persons with developmental disabilities) and their families, serving refreshments, staffing the information table, decorating the nave, rearranging the nave setup for the service, singing in the Rejoicing Spirits choir or playing in the Praise Band.

The Rejoicers are reading the Gospel lesson, carrying banners, leading the congregation in prayer, greeting visitors, and singing in the choir. The enthusiasm and feel of the worship service is exhilarating. The mother of one of the Rejoicers recently said, "the Spirit of the Lord is in this place."

Through word-of-mouth the ministry is extending into the community. Friends of members hear about the program and join in - wanting to volunteer and be part of this joyful experience,

bringing new Rejoicers each month.

The worshipers (Rejoicers and their families/caregivers) come from group homes, from the congregation, which has special needs family members, and from friends of friends who know people with a need for a faith community that is open, warm, and caring. The congregation continues to send out monthly notices to group homes and agencies in the Lehigh Valley to spread the word, inviting all people to attend.

If you know of anyone who would like to be included in this rejoicing and heart-lifting worship experience, please pass the word: "All are welcome here!" They have only your voices to let people know that here is a place and time for all God's children to come in freedom and joy to praise their God. The next service is Sunday, July 13, at 2:30 p.m.

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