



Theology on Tap Berks – An Insider's Perspective



Lift, It Is!

Loaves, Fishes, and ... Simple
Quilts?

Theology on Tap Berks –
An Insider's Perspective

Make Every Step Count

The Power of a Simple Act

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod
Women Attend Seventh Triennial
Gathering



By Kevin Fisk, member of the Young Adults at Maiden creek Church, a UCC and Lutheran shared ministry

Midway through its first season, *Theology on Tap Berks* is already a resounding success.

Begun in September 2008 by the Young Adult Ministry of Maiden creek Church, Blandon, Pa., the discussion series is held the second Tuesday of the month at the Kutztown Tavern.

Pastor Sara Hertzog and other members of Maiden creek Church had attended events at TOT (Theology on Tap) Lancaster and were convinced that a similar venture would be well received in Berks County.

They were right.

Theology on Tap is successful for several reasons, beginning with its philosophical underpinnings and extending to the organization of meetings, selection of topics, and ground rules for participation and interaction.

The main impetus for creating TOT Berks was the belief that faith permeates throughout all aspects of a person's life and beyond traditional church services. The ability to learn about and deal with contemporary issues in an alternative setting has proven to be a beneficial experience for many attendees.

The topics have covered a variety of areas including alternative medicine, politics, and genetic engineering. The treatment of these topics has focused not just on the academic theory behind particular viewpoints, but also their practical implications. Beliefs about God and our place in the world, while abstract in nature, do affect us in a concrete way by informing the decisions we make.

The format and organization of TOT discussions help make it a successful vehicle for faith exploration because there are appropriate times for listening to keynote speakers, asking questions, and sharing opinions or comments.

The hot-button issues that we address, like politics, are divisive

ones that, in other venues, may lead to contentious arguments. So why don't they here?

I believe it is because TOT uses expert speakers who are widely published and have done extensive research in their specialized fields of study. This level of knowledge and experience help these speakers to create skillfully a welcome environment for differing viewpoints. They have the ability to pose thought-provoking questions, challenge people's ideas, and provide insight into the various facets of complicated issues.

The speakers, with strong backgrounds in teaching graduate courses and leading seminars, act both as facilitators and moderators of the discussion, preventing TOT meetings from devolving into ad hoc debates.

The success of TOT Berks is growing. Attendance has continued to increase at a surprising rate. The first meeting included approximately 40 people, and that number grew to nearly 80 by the third meeting. One hundred fifty-one people attended the most recent gathering in December.

One of the most exciting aspects of this explosion in participation is the varied demographics of attendees. They include young, middle-aged, and senior adults. They include men and women, couples and singles, congregation members and non-church goers, those who have a beer and those who don't. The common thread is a shared desire to enrich one's faith in a unique, unconventional way.

If this sounds like a forum you would be interested in, then come order your favorite drink and grab a seat. Stimulating discussion? Yep, we've got that on tap too.

For more information, email TOTBerks@live.com, visit the TOT-Berks page on *Facebook*, or call 610-926-3907. Meetings are held at Kutztown Tavern (Main Street, Kutztown Pa.) on the second Tuesday of each month.