



Companion Synod Opportunities

Medical Sea Container Sent to Tanzania

LIFT Chapel Concerts

JOY in the Hollers of West Virginia!

Community Library to Open in Shartlesville

Companion Synod Opportunities

The Potter in the Pulpit



By Pastor Kurt Garbe, associate of the bishop

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod is blessed to have four companion synods – four opportunities to walk with Lutheran Christians in other parts of the world.

These relationships vary, but one consistent blessing is the personal contact with our brothers and sisters from our companion synods.

Over the next few years, there will be many opportunities to receive guests and to travel to these destinations. Here is a listing of these opportunities:

Saxony, Germany

In October of this year, we will be receiving approximately 16 visitors from Germany. This intergenerational event will be held from October 8 to October 19, 2009.

We are in need of host families for our German visitors. If you are interested in being a host family, contact me (Kurt Garbe) at 570-788-1893 or prkeg@epix.net

There most likely will be a return intergenerational visit to Germany in the spring of 2010.

We have a three-year cycle of youth exchanges with our brothers and sisters in Germany. If we continue (and I am sure that we will), then we will be receiving German youth in October 2010 and sending a group from the US to Germany in June 2011.

Argentina/Uruguay

We are in the process of planning our third youth servant event to



Argentina, which is scheduled to take place in July 2011. Applications for this event will be available in the summer of 2010.

Slovenia

During this coming summer (2009), nine youth and two adult chaperones will visit us from Slovenia. They will spend three weeks with host families learning what it means to be a Lutheran Christian here in the United States.

We still need a few homes in which to host our Slovenian visitors. If you can help, contact me (Kurt Garbe) at 570-788-1893 or prkeg@epix.net

In the summer of 2010, we will be sending a group of youth and chaperones from our synod to visit Slovenia for three weeks. Please watch for information about applications for this event on the synod website or in *Synod News*.

Tanzania

We are planning our next youth servant event to the South Central Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania for June 2010. Applications for this opportunity are due by April 17, 2009. Interviews will take place in early May and members of the group will be selected by the end of May 2009. This will give the youth participants one year to prepare for this trip.

If you are interested in any of the above opportunities, please contact Pastor Kurt E. Garbe at 570-788-1893 or prkeg@epix.net





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Where can you find high-quality sacred-music concerts that are fun, faith-building, and free?

Look no farther than the chapel concerts at **LIFT!**

(**LIFT** is the family event that *everyone* loved in 2007, so it's coming back on Saturday, June 13, 2009, at Muhlenberg College.)

Held in beautiful, historic Egnor Chapel on the Muhlenberg College campus, these 30-minute programs were a popular favorite at the last **LIFT** event, and they promise to bring inspiration and joy again this year to all who attend.

Check out the schedule below and plan to come to one, several, or all of these extraordinary musical presentations.

10:45-11:15 a.m.

Andrea Langkamer-Smith, soprano, presents a vocal recital of spirituals and other sacred works. Andrea, a graduate of the Indiana University School of Music, sings and teaches voice in Allentown. With her warm and elegant voice, Andrea's interpretations of these sacred classics are filled with great emotion and meaning.

11:30 a.m.-12:00 noon

Kinderchor, a vocal ensemble of children in Grades 3-8, sings in concert. Director Michael Bodnyk, a Lehigh Valley native, sings at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City and is the founding Artistic Director of *Music at Faith*, the community music program at Faith Lutheran Church in Whitehall. Catch the spirit of these young, talented singers!



1:15-1:45 p.m.

Around the World with ELW, a hymn festival featuring multicultural hymns from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, is led by the choir from Atonement Lutheran Church, Wyomissing. Director Tom Yenser is an ELCA associate in ministry. This program will feature lots of audience participation, so come prepared to sing, clap, and dance in the aisles!

2:00-2:30 p.m.

Stephen Williams, one of the leading organ performers in our area, offers a recital on the 48-rank, 2,600-pipe Holtkamp organ. Stephen is director of music and organist at St. John Lutheran Church, Allentown, and director of chapel music, college organist, and visiting lecturer in music at Muhlenberg College. Any chance to hear the brilliant playing of this Lehigh Valley virtuoso is not to be missed!

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the spirit



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By Marjorie Paul, member, Arndt's Lutheran Church, Forks Township

Deep in the "hollers" of West Virginia, in one of the poorest counties in the country, a county ranked deepest in despair among *all* the counties in our country, there are families living in poverty beyond our imagination.

And living among them are a pastor and his wife, Wayne and Kathy Osbourne, trying to help. Their job is overwhelming. Yet they are not overwhelmed. They live by their faith and do what they can to make a difference in the lives of those they serve.

Living among us here in the Lehigh Valley is another couple, Harold and Kelly Swisher. The Swishers learned about these needs and vowed to do something about it. Their efforts started "small" but now they fill a huge tractor trailer with food, furniture, appliances, clothing, household goods, mattresses, shoes, sneakers – whatever they can cram in.

They deliver the materials to the Osbournes, who, in turn, distribute it in a judicial manner among those in need.

The Swishers started by mailing packages to a church in an impoverished area of southern West Virginia. As they realized how great the need was, they began packing a snowmobile trailer with food and necessities to take down. A friend who went with them one time and saw the degree of poverty bought them a tractor trailer and now he drives it to West Virginia.

In December, well over 100 children in Bishop, West Virginia, were jumping for joy when they found out that each and every one of them would be receiving...a toy? The newest designer jeans? Candy? No... a simple quilt! A simple quilt created from



free recycled materials in an atmosphere of love and cooperation by volunteers from across the Lehigh Valley.

In their thank-you note, the Osbournes wrote, "You are a true blessing to us this time of year with your beautiful quilts! The children and families of the Appalachian mountains of West Virginia hardly have anything and your quilts were 'right on time' with God's timing – the quilts are helping many stay nice and warm. On behalf of the mountain children, we say thank you and send our love."

You, too, can be a part of this vital ministry. Simply provide volunteers, some food, and space at your congregation, and collect materials for us to use. Pray about it! Then give me (Marjorie Paul) a call at 610-252-7964.

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By Larry Brubaker

In early November 2008, a 40-foot sea container loaded with medical supplies arrived at the Bulongwa Lutheran Hospital in the Livingstone Mountains of southern Tanzania.

The container was the result of efforts by the 16 Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod congregations with companion congregations in Tanzania, together with Global Health Ministries (GHM) of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod is in a companion synod relationship with the South Central Diocese (SCD) of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania. Bulongwa Lutheran Hospital is located in the diocese.

Opened in 1968, the hospital mainly serves people of low economic means, and poverty is increasing. AIDS is the major medical issue. Approximately 70 percent of deaths are due to AIDS and HIV-related complications.

The hospital has been floundering and was ready to close because much of the support of European countries has dwindled. Members of St. Paul Evangelical Lutheran Church in Fleetwood knew the newly appointed administrator of the hospital, Edward Masevella. Through letters and emails, Mr. Masevella told the congregation of the need for "everything" to keep the hospital operating.

Our South Central Diocese companion synod team contacted GHM and requested help in supporting the Bulongwa Hospital. Transportation costs to send the container were in excess of \$19,000. The Witness and Service Ministry Team provided a



grant for \$5,000 for the project; the companion congregations also provided donations. The value of the container full of medical supplies was estimated at over \$120,000.

The container left the U.S. in July and was received amid much cheering and celebration in Bulongwa in early November.

In an email sent to our companion synod team on November 8, hospital administrator Edward Masevella writes,

Dear friends, sisters and brothers in Christ.

We have all reasons of thanking you before God.

I am leaving for a three week seminar with the Doctor In charge.

When we will be back we will be in a position of sending a report of the uses.

Today we send some photos of the special day when we had a special prayer, receiving and unloading the container.

Thanks be to God.

Love Edward.

Another container containing dental supplies and other much needed items to improve the living conditions and education of the people of the SCD is being planned for some time in 2009 or 2010. A group of at least twenty people from five Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod congregations is planning to visit their companion congregations in September 2009.



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By Michelle Park, Reading Eagle

(This article first appeared in the February 14, 2009, issue of the Reading Eagle. It is used by permission.)

It's quite fitting that a book inspired Peggy C. Seitzinger to start a library.

The book detailed how communities are renewing themselves, and it motivated the Shartlesville resident to envision a place where her town could begin to do the same.

"It's really not just about the books," Seitzinger said of the fledgling Shartlesville Community Library. "The need is in getting the community together. It's a place to go (where) people could walk to in the community. I think it could be a focal point for the community."

Seitzinger began pitching the idea around town last year, and now the effort is led by a board of directors and a group of volunteers.

Organizers envision the library as a place where people can access the Internet, sign out books and attend community events. They hope to offer informational programs and homework assistance for students.

The goal is to open during National Library Week, which begins April 12. Operating hours would depend on when volunteers could work, Seitzinger said.

The library will occupy part of a recent addition to Friedens Lutheran Church on Wolf Creek Road. Friedens is providing the space rent-free, and the church and local Lions Club have committed to paying the library's monthly Internet bills.



Bookshelves were donated by Lyondell Chemical Co., West Chester, and Upper Bern Township donated \$1,000 to the effort.

An effort to fill those shelves took place in February with a book and materials collection at the church.

There is no community center in Shartlesville, and the closest libraries are in Hamburg and Bernville, which are about a 15-minute drive away.

The county bookmobile stops in Shartlesville periodically, but many parents and children cannot meet it when it comes to town, said the Rev. Jerry S. Kulp, Friedens Lutheran Church pastor.

"The youth in the community need some place to be that's more educational than hanging out in the corners," said Alyse F. Beahr, a library board member.

Shartlesville resident Lorraine I. Hix, 78, said the library will be a benefit to seniors, especially those who no longer drive.

"I think it's a great idea because there's no place for people in town who do not have access to a computer to use one," she said.

It's unknown whether the Shartlesville Community Library will eventually join the Berks County Public Libraries system, which has 20 branches.

"Every library starts out learning to operate on its own," Seitzinger said. "You have to kind of prove yourself."

Julie Rinehart, Berks County libraries administrator, said the county system is aware of the effort in Shartlesville and has provided Seitzinger with some technical advice through its youth services librarian.

For the Shartlesville library to achieve affiliate status, it would need municipal government support of a minimum of \$2 per capita, Rinehart said.

She added that Shartlesville would fall under the Hamburg Public Library service area, and money is always an issue for public libraries.

"In the current 2009 budget, some of our state aid, which is a significant portion of our funds, has been withheld as part of the governor's budgetary reserve," Rinehart said. "Every library budget is tighter this year, and, in truth, library budgets are tight even in good years."



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By Leslie Wagner, member, Jerusalem, Schuylkill Haven

Dan Bell never thought of himself as artistic but from the moment he sat down at a potter's wheel, there was something there. He felt as if he knew instinctively how to use it and what to do.

The year was 1980 and a college art requirement needed to be fulfilled. Dan's first choice, stained glass, was full, so he took pottery and uncovered a talent – and hobby – that he enjoys to this day.

This past September, Pastor Dan Bell shared this hobby with his congregation at Jerusalem Lutheran Church, Schuylkill Haven. The Christian education committee decided to use a vacation Bible school program – *Jerusalem Marketplace* (Group Publishing) – to create a Rally Day event that would appeal to the whole church family.

Every part of the church property was used for the event. There were nine different shops in the marketplace. A well at the center of "town" was at the entrance where visitors were invited to wash and oil their feet (shoes were optional).

A Jerusalem street scene was built to connect the outdoor pavilion and Green Space to the indoor shops. Outside there were animals and kids' activities. Visitors made dreidels (four-sided spinning tops) and learned how to play the dreidel game; they practiced writing Hebrew letters on parchment scrolls and danced the hora.

Participants and visitors wore period costumes that were borrowed from generous friends at St. John Lutheran Church, Tamaqua. Each shop featured an interactive activity designed to



engage visitors with shopkeepers.

Pastor Dan ran the pottery shop. Tying the Sunday morning worship service to the marketplace event that followed was the goal; clay became the 'connecting' material.

Dan has both an electric and a pedal potter's wheel. The electric wheel was set up in the sanctuary and the 'pulpit potter' threw a pot while preaching that day. Children were invited to sit around the wheel and a lesson from Jeremiah 18 came to life as Pastor Dan talked of the Master Potter and humanity as the clay that comes to life in the Master Potter's hands.

Another interesting – and historic – connection was made that day. The pot that Pastor Bell created during the service became the vessel that held the church mortgage that the congregation joyfully burned the following week!