

SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA



World Hunger Challenge

A challenge from two members of a NEPA Synod congregation:

"If the special offering for ELCA World Hunger received at the 2016 Synod Assembly totals \$15,000, we'll match the \$15,000!"

These members are deeply committed to supporting the ELCA World Hunger Appeal. When they learned that every synod assembly receives a special offering for ELCA World Hunger, they wanted to make the most of the opportunity. They are confident that our congregations can raise the \$15,000 by the time Assembly 2016 meets.

How to meet the Challenge

- Announce the challenge in newsletters and worship bulletins.
- Receive congregational offerings in the weeks before the assembly and have your voting members bring a check with the total to place in the assembly special hunger offering.
- Encourage members to make special gifts to the Hunger Appeal.
- Use ELCA World Hunger Appeal resources for 2016 to learn more about this ministry.



Belleman's Mission Team at work in South Carolina

Over the past 13 years, mission work has become a primary goal for the congregation at Salem Belleman's Church in Mohrsville. It began with the first trip to a Navajo Indian Reservation in 2003, and there have been nearly 30 trips and about 100 participants since. The focus of the trips generally revolves around natural disasters, such as the storms and flooding which occurred across South Carolina in October 2015. Parts of the state received more than 20 inches of rain from October 1-6.

The Belleman's Mission Team planned their trips around helping that region. The group coordinated with the DRSI (Disaster Recovery Support Initiative) in West Columbia, South Carolina to work March 29-April 1, 2016. The jobs involved demolition, concrete work, flooring, and drywall. Damage to the trailer at one site led to some mold issues. Part of the team secured and sealed the roof while others removed moldy drywall and flooring, replacing the damaged areas with new materials. The group of eight was featured on the local news in West Columbia (<http://www.wltx.com/mb/news/flood-victims-receive-needed-help-/115055846>).



White Privilege Conference

Last year the synod's Youth, Young Adult and Family Ministry Team applied for a Youth and Young Adult Innovation Grant made possible through the Campaign for the ELCA and received \$10,000 to focus on healing the wounds of racism.

Five youth (David Bowen, Rayna Carr, Billy Garrison, Tim Garrison), two college students/Bear Creek Staff (Jenna Hanzel and Kelsi Kegerize), Pastor Maritza Dolich, Associate in Ministry Karen Matthias-Long, and Bishop Zeiser used some of the funds to attend the White Privilege Conference in Philadelphia, April 15-17.

The conference provided many opportunities to learn about racism and privilege through keynote presentations, workshops, movies, affinity groups, and action groups. The next step for this group is to determine how to share their experience with youth and young adults in the synod, moving from knowledge to action. They will be part of the Youth, Young Adult and Family Ministry Team report at the synod assembly and will have a display in God's Playground.



Called Forward Together in Christ

A process to decide the ELCA's future directions

The ELCA is a young church at only 28 years old. It is a good time to take a look at where we are as God's people and try to understand what God has in store for us. And we think it is an exciting time to be looking forward together as we approach the 500th anniversary of the Reformation in 2017.



- We want to create a vision for the future ELCA - as a church with solid foundations sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and making a difference in the world locally and globally.
- We want to discover how we can continue to faithfully serve God's mission in the years ahead and reach a shared understanding among church leaders about the ministries that are most important.
- And we want to assess whether the structures that were set up for this church are right for the future, and as part of this consider how we use our resources in the best possible way. There are many challenges.

Until the end of June we are reaching out to people across this church to be part of a conversation on the future of our church. We will be seeking ideas and feedback from as many people and parts of the ELCA as we can reach.

This information will be used to analyze and explore what the future church could be. In July we will release a Called Forward Together in Christ Paper that will serve two purposes: to let everyone know the main messages coming through, and to share some options for the future that can be tested through further consultation in August and September.

Speak with your congregational leaders about how to get the conversation started in your community. Go to ELCA.org/future for resources and to stay up to date on how to be involved through surveys and local conversations.

The November Church Council meeting will consider and approve a statement on future identity, directions and priorities. This will be launched in 2017 as part of the Reformation anniversary commemorations, and then work will begin to implement the directions this church has been called together to take forward.