

# SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

## Meet Your Synod's Staff



**Brenda Stauffer**

Brenda is the Administrative Assistant to the Bishop. She maintains his calendar and receives all of his incoming telephone calls.

She is also responsible for maintaining the various rosters of church leaders. If you have a change in contact information, especially email address changes, please be sure to advise her.

As part of her roster responsibilities, Brenda also handles the information regarding transitions, both of rostered leaders and of congregations.

Brenda also takes care of ordering office supplies for The Lutheran Center.

She has been in her position with the synod for the last 8 years. Prior to that she served for 22 years as the parish secretary at Prince of Peace, Johnsonville.

Brenda and her husband, Larry, have one son and two grandsons. She enjoys working in her flower beds; and along with Larry, she collects toy trains.

## The Gallery at St. John's, Easton



When front porches were common, they were often neighborhood gathering places where friendships were formed. A church leader once said that every church needs a "Front Porch Ministry."

In the late 1990's Easton experienced an influx of artists because of the affordability of space and the proximity to New York City. This inspired St. John's, located in downtown Easton, to find a way to relate to the growing art and business communities.

In the year 2000, *The Gallery at St. John's* opened. A committee of six was formed to oversee its operation. Six exhibits are held each year. One thousand postcards are printed to announce each show. A bulk mailing is sent to 725 recipients, and a press release is issued. There are solo, group, juried, and invitational shows utilizing various media.

In addition to the fine arts exhibits, the Gallery hosts occasional concerts, art demonstrations, book signings, poetry readings, and dramas. The Gallery is open each Sunday afternoon, with two attendants on duty to greet visitors.

The Gallery has become a prominent location in downtown Easton. People from many religious backgrounds and denominations visit each year. It is not uncommon to hear someone say that they are waiting for friends to arrive for a luncheon engagement, having arranged to meet at the gallery.

For St. John's, Easton, the Gallery indeed has become a welcoming "Front Porch Ministry."

## Learning Ministries Day

Saturday, January 29, 2017

### Growing in Faith



Always [Re]Forming

Through December 31, the cost for the event per person is \$30 (includes lunch). After that date, the cost will be \$45.

For more information and to register, visit the synod website at <http://nepasynod.org> (under the events tab). Or you may contact Karen Matthias-Long at [karen@nepasynod.org](mailto:karen@nepasynod.org) or 610-266-5101.

*(continued from the right-hand column)*

They asked questions such as "What would Good Shepherd be like if it greatly deepened people's relationship with God." "What would Good Shepherd be like if it equipped members very well to share their faith with others."

Some of the "great" vision for Good Shepherd included:

- being more authentic,
- having wider viewpoints,
- listening in a non-judgmental manner,
- risking to go where God wants us to be instead of where we want to be;
- serving with more energy.

The "feel" of this vision will guide Good Shepherd as it seeks to do what matters to God and neighbor.

If your congregation wants to explore this process, visit the website at [congregationalvitalitysurvey.com](http://congregationalvitalitysurvey.com).

## Good Shepherd, Wilkes-Barre Congregational Vitality Project

Like many congregations in our synod, Good Shepherd, Wilkes-Barre, has been aware of the cultural shift that has been occurring in our society that leaves church involvement a low priority on many people's "to do" list. It was obvious that worship attendance, participation in ministry programs, and giving of member's time, talent and treasure was diminishing.

As a response to what many leaders were observing, the Congregational Council decided to spend a Saturday morning last winter in retreat using the Congregational Vitality Project Quick-Check Survey as a discussion starter.



Fifteen statements of a vital congregation were discussed in small groups scoring each one as it related to Good Shepherd on a scale of 1-5. After our morning of discussion, Good Shepherd's score fell around a "3", or "somewhat".

The vitality project survey suggested that Good Shepherd was primed for a redevelopment of its ministry and mission. The discussion throughout the morning retreat provided a lot of positive energy for the Council members. There was a sense of getting a handle on what could be done about what everyone was feeling.

The first thing addressed was a change in the ministry structure of the congregation from committee based to a ministry teams. Throughout the summer, however, Council members realized that changing the structure was but only a small part of the path toward redevelopment and renewal. They sensed a loss in some of the initial energy from the winter Council retreat, and they felt a need to challenge themselves towards a vision of ministry and mission.

In the fall Council met for another Saturday morning retreat and again used the fifteen statements of a vital congregation from the Quick-check survey. This time, however, they challenged themselves to imagine what the congregation would be like if it scored a "5" or "great" on all the statements on the survey. then they broke into small groups to explore it.

*(continues in the left-hand column)*

Synod News is published monthly by the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA  
2354 Grove Road, Allentown PA 18109; 610-266-5101.  
[nepsinfo1988@gmail.com](mailto:nepsinfo1988@gmail.com); [www.godslove.org](http://www.godslove.org)