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WE News of the LSS: December 10, 2025

1 message

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Wed, Dec 10, 2025 at 9:11 AM

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WE ARE *Synod*



THE E-NEWSLETTER OF THE LOWER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD | December 10, 2025



Lower Susquehanna Synod Photo Of The Week
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[Cooperative Multi-Congregation Youth Ministry Retreat at Camp Nawakwa, Nov.14-16, 2025]



God With Us

An Advent Reflection from Bishop Stephen Herr

Lower Susquehanna Synod Bishop Stephen R. Herr invites us to look to two early church saints - St. Nicholas and St. Lucy - as living witnesses to the light of Christ. Their stories offer us powerful models of generosity, courage, and faith as we experience this season of holy anticipation.



2026 Wellness Retreat

January 25–26, 2026 | The Hotel Hershey

Ministry is a sacred calling and it can also be demanding. Our annual Wellness Retreat invites rostered ministers to step away for a time of rest and reconnection with God and one another. Led by synod staff, the retreat centers on connection: deepening our relationships with God and one another, renewing our spirits, and remembering that ministry is never a solitary journey. Held at The Hotel Hershey, known for its exceptional hospitality and beautiful setting, the retreat offers both day and overnight options. Registration open now until January 5, 2026.

[Learn More & Register.](#)

**January 10 Worship with Rite of Ordination**

Jennifer Taylor has been called to serve as pastor for St. Paul Lutheran Church, Littlestown, and will be ordained into the Office of Word and Sacrament Ministry during a Service of Holy Communion with the Rite of Ordination on Saturday, January 10, 2026, at 10:30 a.m. in Christ Lutheran Church, [30 Chambersburg Street, Gettysburg](#). Rostered ministers are invited to vest and process. The color for the day is red. If you are unable to attend, your prayers are requested for this ordinand.



Helping Our Neighbors Stay Warm

by the Rev. Matthew Best

In this LSS Justice Ministry blog, the Rev. Matthew Best shares about the Memorial Blanket Project and our call to care for our neighbors in need.

[Learn More.](#)



Hate Has No Home Here

by The Rev. Aaron Erdley

The "Hate Has No Home Here" rally emerged from the Mechanicsburg clergy's unified response to a hate group distributing recruitment cards at the 2025 Halloween Parade. Pastor Aaron Erdley from Trindle Spring

Lutheran Church, Mechanicsburg, writes about his experience attending the rally and hearing powerful speakers, including the Rev. Elizabeth Eckman, St. John's Lutheran Church, Shiremanstown, affirming that such hatred has no place in our community.

[Learn More.](#)



Installation Announcements

The Rev. Liz Polanzke will be installed as pastor for Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church, [119 North 8th Street, Lebanon](#), on Sunday, January 4, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. All are invited to attend. The color of the day is white.

The Rev. Lisa Hair will be installed as pastor for St. John's Lutheran Church, [11 North Queen Street, Maytown](#), on Sunday, January 4, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. All are invited to attend. Clergy are invited to vest. The color of the day is white.



New Year Intention Setting Online Retreat

January 10, 2026

9:30 a.m. - Noon ET

Join Breathing in Christ for a peaceful morning retreat designed to help you slow down, listen deeply, and set intentions that reflect your values and God's calling for your life. Through guided reflection, gentle practices, and prayerful discernment, you'll create meaningful intentions for the year ahead; ones that align your attention with your intention in Christ. Whether you're seeking clarity, renewal, or a fresh spiritual beginning, this retreat offers space for your soul to breathe.

[Learn More & Register.](#)



Updates From Across the Synod

Planning for Mission Support in 2026

As your congregation prepares and approves budgets and ministry plans for the coming calendar year, we invite you to prayerfully consider your Mission Support commitment for 2026. Mission Support is how we, together, live out our shared calling as the Body of Christ: strengthening congregations, nurturing leaders, supporting new ministries, and accompanying global and local partners in God's mission. Every gift makes a difference in sharing the gospel and serving our neighbors near and far. Congregations are encouraged to complete their Mission Support Plan and submit it using the 2026 fillable form.

[Learn More.](#)

Rostered Ministers Continuing Education & Training

Synod Council adopted amendments to the Policy for Continuing Education and Required Training for Rostered Ministers, as approved by the 2025 Synod Assembly. [The new policy is available here.](#)

New Employment Listings

New employment listings are now available on our website!

- Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Harrisburg, is searching for an administrative assistant.
- The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Lancaster, is seeking a cantor.

To learn more about these employment opportunities and others from around our synod, or to submit a job posting, visit the [LSS Employment Listings page](#).



In the News

Union Lutheran Church, York, was featured in the *York Dispatch* as they discern the best use of their aging buildings and caring for their community.

[Read More.](#)

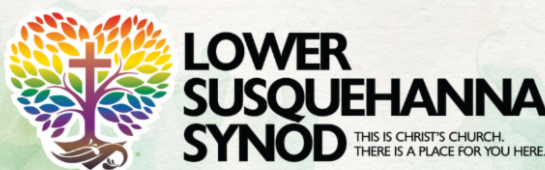
Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, York Springs, made the news for their holiday food drive.

[Watch](#) and [Read More.](#)

Faith Leaders Across Pennsylvania Urge Lawmakers to Pass LGBTQ+ Protections in this interview with LAMPa that included Bishop Stephen Herr and Pastor Joel Folkemer.

[Listen.](#)

Lower Susquehanna Synod Staff Transitions



Staff Updates

At the end of this calendar year, Marty Shifflett and Cathy Paul are retiring and will conclude their service. Marty and Cathy were recognized at the 2025 Synod Assembly and will also be recognized at an upcoming synod staff luncheon. We give thanks to God for their faithful ministries among us and pray God's richest blessings for each of them in this next season.

Bishop Herr continues to restructure our synod staffing model to align with new mission and ministry goals. A complete update will be shared in the new year. As part of the restructuring, a new expanded role for the conference deans and secretaries is underway. In addition, the portfolio for the assistant to the bishop relating to candidacy is being merged into other synod staff positions and a position to address new mission goals is in development.

As a result of these position changes, Pastor Dana Blouch-Hanson, who has served as an Assistant to the Bishop since 2019, will conclude her service with the synod staff in the first quarter of 2026. Pastor Blouch-Hanson is a trusted and faithful member of synod staff. Her contributions to the candidacy process and her accompaniment of candidates continues our synod's legacy of forming quality candidates for rostered ministry in the ELCA. During her service, Pastor Dana related to the Chambersburg, Gettysburg, and Hanover Conferences helping to connect them to our synod and our ministries, she managed several synod assemblies, and contributed significantly to our synod's youth ministry programming. We give thanks to God for Pastor Blouch-Hanson's years of service and for the many ways her ministry has blessed this synod. We hold her in prayer with gratitude as she prepares for this transition.



We Pray Together

We are a synod that prays together and for one another. Be sure to visit our website prayer page each week.

[Prayer Lists.](#)

EVENTS, OPPORTUNITIES, & UPDATES FROM OUR MISSION PARTNERS

Christmas with the Master Singers of Virginia

Sunday, December 21, 2025 at 4:00 p.m.

Join St. James Lutheran Church, [109 York Street, Gettysburg](#), for a Christmas concert by the Master Singers of Virginia, one of the region's premier a cappella ensembles. This free concert invites you to enter the warmth and wonder of the holidays with choral works and festive favorites.

From the radiant beauty of Eric Whitacre's "Lux Aurumque and Glow", to beloved carols like "Silent Night" and "Ding Dong! Merrily on High," this program celebrates light born in darkness and the joy of the season.

No tickets needed! All are welcome to this special afternoon of music and meaning.

Lutheran Men in Mission *Ambassador-Gram*

Fall 2025

The Fall 2025 *LMM Ambassador-Gram* is available now!

[Learn More.](#)

Preaching Cohort Launching for 2026

Led by the Rev. Matt Lenahan

Pastor Matt Lenahan is launching a new preaching cohort for 2026, designed for preachers who feel called to be courageous public proclaimers in a time marked by chaos, cruelty, and despair. Against the backdrop of the climate crisis and the political and economic volatility arising from our shared fears and uncertainty, this cohort will explore a central question: *How do we proclaim the gospel faithfully and boldly with so much uncertainty and doubt about the future?* The cohort will meet monthly for learning, practice, and support. This is a coaching-based, interactive experience that will include special guests offering wisdom, perspective, and practical guidance for preaching in today's world.

[Learn More & Register.](#)

***Living Lutheran* Launches New Site and Features**

The new LivingLutheran.org launches on Monday, December 8. Members of congregations in our synod will be able to set up a free digital membership that offers these perks:

- A welcoming, easy-to-access format.
- A personalized dashboard prioritizing the stories that interest them.
- Access to members-only content, and the ability to save and "like" articles.
- E-news delivery options to get the stories they want, both online and in their email inboxes.

Please visit livinglutheran.org/subscribe to sign up for your free digital membership. *Living Lutheran* tells the stories of the ELCA, bonding us as a church across congregations, synods, states, regions and countries. For more information, visit livinglutheran.org/subscribe. You'll also find

options for individual and group subscriptions to the print magazine. Please email questions to livinglutheran@elca.org.

WE ARE SYNOD, the e-newsletter of the Lower Susquehanna Synod, connects and shares news and events highlighting the mission and ministry of congregations, our synod, and the ELCA. If you have an idea or a story to share, a prayer concern, or an event or job posting you'd like to advertise on our website, please submit using the our [Community Submissions Form](#).

NEW! We plan to feature photos from a variety of photographers, congregations, and ministries for the **LOWER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD PHOTO OF THE WEEK**. Have a photo to submit? Submissions (1200 X 400) can be uploaded to our [Community Submissions Form](#). By submitting a photo, you are giving the Lower Susquehanna Synod permission to use that photo in promotional materials.

For more detailed information about what's happening around our synod, [VISIT LSS-ELCA.ORG](#).

CONNECT WITH US



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SUSQUEHANNA
SYNOD** THIS IS CHRIST'S CHURCH.
THERE IS A PLACE FOR YOU HERE.

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