

Conferences

Allegany and Washington County Conferences

The Rev. Linda Alessandri, Dean

"I lift my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?

My help comes from the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth." (Psalm 121: 1-2)

Greetings from the beautiful mountains, rich farm lands and small towns of the Allegany and Washington County conferences. Folks who live near the Rockies, like to tell us our mountains are mere hills. Not to us. More importantly, they remind us of our masterful Creator and loving Lord from whom comes our strength and help.

Clergy of the Allegany and Washington County conferences met twice in the past year, using Hancock as our rendezvous point. At each meeting we enjoyed the presence of Bishop Bill Gohl. The Washington County Rostered Ministers also met the first Thursday of each month, September - May, rotating locations and worship leadership. In their monthly meetings, there has been focus on the local Opioid epidemic and where churches and clergy might be helpful to those battling addiction and their families. Interest has been expressed in sponsoring another Rural Ministry Conference. There is a weekly pericope study for rostered ministers on the other Thursdays of the month (11 am) followed by an opportunity to share lunch and offer mutual support.

The five churches of the Allegany County continue to do meaningful ministry even amid transitions of pastoral leadership. St. John's (Cumberland) celebrated the installation of Pastor Vicki Hamel as the church continues its many efforts in the battle against hunger. St. Luke's (Cumberland) said farewell to Pastor David Wright and thank Pastor Rick Shives for his on-going help with visitation and scheduling Sunday pulpit supply. Christ Lutheran (LaVale) said good-bye to their much-appreciated, interim Pastor Tormod Svensson as they soon receive Pastor Daniel Swanson as their new pastor. St Paul (Frostburg) and St. Paul (Cumberland) are being served by interim pastors from our Episcopal partnership.

The eighteen congregations of Washington County are actively doing God's work, seven of them in three different Parish or Cooperative configurations. Mt. Zion, Rohrersville) celebrated its 175th anniversary. In the week of Nov. 4 - 10, congregations joined together to provide the meals and evening staff for the REACH cold weather shelter in Hagerstown. While recovering from arson damage, St. Paul's (Funkstown) did not miss a beat --- all program and worship carried on and restorations will soon be completed.

St. Mark's (Hagerstown) have undertaken major renovations to make their building more accessible and to have a kitchen able to better serve the community

In one year Trinity Lutheran (Hagerstown) has celebrated the ordination of a daughter of the church (Sarah Schoefield Wright), the installation of its interim pastor (Rev. David Eisenhuth) and the setting apart of two deacons (Peggy Harding and Inge Dudda). Pastor Rick Shives was installed at St. Peter's (Clear Spring.) Pastor Hoda Zavandro is serving as interim at St. John's (Hagerstown) and soon-to-be seminary graduate, Kayla Edmonds, is the vicar at the Conococheague Parish (St. Paul and Mt Tabor in Clear Spring). Christ Lutheran was sad to lose their interim, Rev. Kibreab Gudeta, but continues to seek God's path for their mission.

It was with great sadness that we mourned the death of Pastor Chris Ramsey after being struck by a car. Pastor Ramsey had returned to Hagerstown after retirement. He resumed his membership at Trinity Lutheran (Hagerstown) and served in a variety of capacities. He served as interim-pastor at the Beaver Creek-Keedysville Parish. The members of the congregations he served and his colleagues deeply appreciated his wisdom, wit, compassion, tenacity and faithfulness. He is greatly missed and we proclaim "Christ is Risen. Alleluia!"

Anne Arundel and Baltimore West Conferences

The Rev. Kati Kluckman-Ault, Dean

Anne Arundel Conference Report

The Anne Arundel Conference met regularly with a short hiatus for the summer months. The location of the conference meetings were shared among the congregations who make up the AA Conference. Joint conference meetings with Baltimore West took place December 2018.

A connectivity grant was received and the councils of several congregations of the AA Conference held a joint council retreat on March 30, led by Deacon Louise Williams. This retreat focused on spiritual practice and addressing adaptive challenges in the life of the church.

Rev. Nikki Parrish became Pastor Emeritus at Joy Reigns

Rev. Shawn Brandon was extended a regular call at Gloria Dei!

Rev. Russell Fink died March 2019

Rev. George Tuttle completed his interim work at St. John Linthicum with the Rev. G. Edward Whetstone following.

Rev. Dave Oravec deployed and serving..... Rev. Bill Gilroy is serving as interim at St. Martin's, Annapolis.

Baltimore West Conference Report

The Baltimore West Conference met regularly through the past year. The location of the conference meetings were shared among the congregations who make up the BW Conference. A joint conference meetings with Anne Arundel Conference took place in December 2018.

The Rev. Gigi Sjiera-Grant retired from First LC in Ellicott City

The Rev. Chad Kline completed his service at Abiding Savior, Columbia to take a call to Wisconsin

The Rev. Timothy Feaser completed his service at Trinity LC in Reisterstown to take a call to Virginia.

Baltimore City Conference

The Rev. Christine Parker, Dean

The Baltimore City Conference has continued to transform as we have welcomed and supported two new mission starts. Dreams & Visions, our mission start in the Lauraville-Hamilton neighborhoods led by Pastor Emily Scott, has done extraordinary work in serving the whole community, especially marginalized peoples - "Together, we're creating an imaginative spiritual community of restoration, where we find the courage to be our full selves." Mountain of God, led by Pastor Jean Paul Makano, have called together a diverse community, encouraged by their host congregation Christ Lutheran Church at the Inner Harbor. They have found inspiration in Exodus: God said to Moses, "I Am Who I Am. So say to the Israelites, 'I Am has sent me to you.'" They have a vibrant ministry, and use song and dance to praise God joyfully. These ministries have not only been a blessing to the direct communities they serve, but have given our whole conference a sense of purpose and hope in what God is doing in Baltimore City in the years and decades to come. We have also continued to work in partnership with CLAIM, Coalition of Lutherans Advancing In Mission, to more intentionally share ministry, best practices, and energy.

Baltimore North and East and Harford Conferences

The Rev. Lisa Arrington, Dean

We meet as a conference the first Thursday of every month at St. John's Lutheran Parkville (usually 10 am). There is a lot of teamwork in planning to engage in the goals of our Synod Vision:

- Connectedness
- Leadership
- Discipleship
- Communication

From September to May we planned for speakers, workshops and engaging topics related to our synod vision:

Connectedness: All Play/ John Auger VP synod council

Leadership: Stuart Luce

Discipleship: Training Lay Preachers & Adult Discipleship - Nancy Kraft

Communications: The latest tools for Communications: Julie Stecker, Asst to Bishop

Discipleship: ELCA recommendations for reaching Young Adults –Laura Sinche

Connectedness: Welcome Caleb Wilde author of Confessions of a Funeral Director. Free & open to all.

Communications: David Hansen live webinar 10:30 am "What to Put on Your Website and Why."

Discipleship: Apprenticeship Model for youth -Jeremy Morelock

Leadership: Tom Corcoran, Associate to the Pastor @ Church of the Nativity and co-author of Rebuilt + updates from Bishop Gohl and VP John Auger.

Updates and communication are shared by various members of our group by Facebook page and email. We relied on free will donations (\$20-40 per roster leader) to cover the cost of 3 professional speakers this year. This also helped events be advertised as free and open to the public (congregations). Two of our conferences were held in the evening to encourage members of our congregation to attend. Author Caleb Wilde drew 40 people. We hope our May grand finale event has even more!

We rejoice to share in the installations of new pastors to our territory over the past year:

Pastor Sarah Wright, St. John's Sweet Air

Pastor Chris Schaefer, Divinity Lutheran Towson

Pastor Betty Lou Deuchler, Salem Lutheran Jarrettsville

We also weep with the closing service held at Lord of Life, Edgewood and the courageous leadership of Vicar John Deason, Rev. Bob Harvey Synodical Administration

We look forward to building the team and being church together with you.

Delmarva North and Delmarva South Conferences

The Rev. Barbara Melosh, Dean

Delmarva North. Our colleague group continues to meet weekly for mutual support, shared ministry, and study of the lectionary texts for the coming Sunday.

Pastors and members participated in leadership training led by Candy Maxwell, who guided a searching and thoughtful day-long workshop on adaptive leadership.

Pr. Scott Maxwell inspired and organized an ecumenical Bible study that gathered many people from across New Castle county. Our colleagues and others supported this effort by teaching the weekly studies at multiple locations.

Pr. Jason Churchill was instrumental in reviving the Christian Council, an ecumenical organization of roster leaders and officers (primarily Lutheran, Methodist, and Episcopalian)

Pr. Linda Gunderson organized a successful grant application for Youth Ministry, awarded \$40,000 for ministries in the congregations of the conference.

On Palm/Passion Sunday several colleagues and members participated in (and helped to organize) a walk for racial justice through downtown Wilmington, jointly planned with Trinity Episcopal.

This conference now comprises nine congregations, with the merging of Spirit of Life and Zion. The new congregation, Unity, is served by Pr. Clarence Pettit and Pr. Melissa Lemons.

Pr. Daniel Swanson at Hope New Castle has received and accepted a new call, so that congregation will be in transition. Pr. Greg Johnson is serving an extended interim ministry at Tree of Life, Odessa.

Pr. John Nelson (St. Philip) is serving as our conference secretary, following Pr. Scott Maxwell (St. Mark)

Delmarva South. We are currently meeting every other month, to accommodate our more dispersed locations and the transitions in the conference. Five of our eight congregations are in transition. We have been happy to welcome colleagues who are serving as part-time interims and grateful that they have been active participants in our gatherings. In our meetings we share devotions, prayer, updates on our ministries and news from our synod—and lunch afterwards with convivial fellowship.

Pr. Mark Molter (Community) is serving as our conference secretary, following Pr. Karen Larson (called to another synod).

Frederick Conference

The Rev. Kathy Vitalis Hoffman, Dean

The Frederick Conference Rostered Ministers met monthly on the second Tuesday of the month at 1:30 to 3:00 p.m. On behalf of the conference I thank the staff and congregational leaders of Good Shepherd who provided a central location for our regular meetings. Members of the conference took turns leading worship each month. The Assistant to the Bishop, Pastor Robin Simpson Litton often attended to give updates on new partnerships developing for shared ministry. Pastor Naomi Hartman serves as our secretary.

Here is a brief summary of our meetings:

August: In August we discussed priorities for the coming program year.

September: Conference members presented specific program ideas for the year.

October: We did not meet as a conference due to the Bishop's Leadership Conference.

November: Bishop Bill Gohl and Vice-President John Auger presented led discussion regarding our synod.

December: Rev. Dr. Mark Oldenburg, Professor and Dean of the Chapel Emeritus of United Lutheran Seminary taught about the discipline of Lectio Divina and also led in reflection on an Advent Text.

January: Favorite books and resources were shared.

February: Cancelled due to weather.

March: Shannon Aleshire, Executive Director of the Frederick County Mental Health Association presented information and provided resources.

April: Tessie Pfeifer, Coordinator of the Across Ages program and Elizabeth Chung, Executive Director of the Asian American Center of Frederick met with our conference.

May: Kathy Schey, Director of the Frederick County Division of Senior Services will meet with the conference.

Westminster Conference

The Rev. Dr. Michael A. Dubsky, Dean

Greetings from your brothers and sisters in Christ in the Westminster Conference,

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer

The Westminster Conference rostered leaders meet monthly on the second Thursday for worship, fellowship and conversation about issues facing our congregations. We alternate between meeting at the Bell Cedars Retreat Center at Carroll Lutheran Village and various host congregations. In May, there is a pre-assembly meeting for clergy and lay synod assembly voting members.

Our congregations have a number of varied and exciting ministries which seek to share the Gospel in Word and Deed. We continue our support of the shared ministries of Carroll Lutheran Village and Carroll Lutheran School. A highlight of each year are the Spring and Fall Westminster Conference Men's Dinner where 125+ men gather to sing hymns, pray, hear from a speaker and share a fellowship meal.

Pastor Peter Naschke has been called to the Mt Joy-St. Paul Parish.

Three significant events related to Carroll Lutheran Village have impacted the Westminster Conference: 1. Pastor Stacy Brady has blessed in her work as director of Church Relations, 2. Chaplain Jimmie Schwartz was in a car accident in January and has been dealing with severe injuries...the Conference holds him in prayer, 3. After two decades of service, CLV CEO Geary Milliken is retiring this summer.

This summer, the Westminster Conference will hold a joint deployed Mobile-Mar-Lu-Ridge week of VBS/Camp at Carroll Lutheran School.

This June, Pastor Michael Adams will celebrate 50 years of ordained ministry.

A word of gratitude for the faithfulness of our Current Secretary Pastor Charlie Marshall.

In the midst of the joys and struggles of life in Carroll County, the Conference congregations strive to provide a faithful witness, Making Christ Known.

Peace of the Lord be with you!