

Living Her Baptismal Promise

Linda Mertz Shares Her Faith and Inspires Others

For many years, Linda Mertz wanted to take the Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training offered by Lutheran Congregational Services. However, her goal was thwarted due to a cancer diagnosis that eventually led to her losing the ability to speak.

She has long been an active church member, who previously sang alto in the choir and served as a communion assistant among other roles, at St. Luke's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zieglersville, PA. She can now realize her dream of being a Lay Eucharistic Visitor after completing the training at Advent Lutheran Church in West Chester.

In Her Own Words

My journey began in 1998. I had a lump on top of my head which turned out to be a rare cancer that took a month to identify. Unfortunately, removing it was not enough.

It returned two years later in a lymph node behind my right ear, so I was sent to a specialist at Fox Chase Cancer Center who advised a radical neck dissection followed by radiation treatments.

I reacted badly to the radiation, losing 70 pounds within two months. I was hospitalized, unable

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Recovery Continues from Hurricane Ida

For Hundreds More than a Year After the Storm

I met Ms. Latania Fox for the first time at Christ Lutheran Church in Upper Darby just before Christmas 2022. She left me feeling upbeat and inspired after our short conversation about her disaster recovery.

Latania is one of the 232 Ida survivors in Delaware County who responded to a survey the Lutheran Disaster Response – Eastern PA program of LCS sent out to 3,500 residents in Delaware County between October 2022 and Jan 2023. The survey was sent to families who registered with FEMA and who had at least one family member with one or more social vulnerabilities: over age 65, income lower than 80% AMI (Adjusted Median Income) or an access/functional need.

All of the 232 people who responded to the survey were subsequently called so that we could learn more about their current disaster related needs. LCS and our partners are able to provide things like referrals for legal aid, gift cards, furniture, appliances, rental assistance, home repairs, and disaster case management.

Linda Frey has been serving as Latania's disaster case manager on behalf of LCS since October.

Recently, Latania talked with me in more detail about her disaster recovery. "When Ida hit, my daughter and I were renting a house in Chester, PA. We had never experienced anything like this before. The water just ruined everything. It came up from the basement and in through the roof. In the days after the storm, our landlord refused to do anything to help us. The house was in a state of disrepair before the storm and he said he wasn't going to fix anything now. We tried to stay and clean up but the situation was awful. Mold was growing. Our washer and dryer, furniture and all of our personal items were ruined. I do a pretty good job of keeping my head above water, but this time I was drowning."

Latania continued, "My daughter, she is 23 and disabled, we left that house to live in a back building on a friend's property. It had a bathroom and bed, but

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With new dry wall, paint, and flooring completed, the final touch is replacing furniture.



Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training

Lay Eucharistic Visitor
Training is a one-day
training event.

Spring & Fall
2023 Dates:

April 29th

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
4201 Stoudts Ferry Bridge Rd,
Reading, PA 19605

June 3rd

St. Michael Lutheran Church
25 E Church St, Sellersville, PA 18960

October 7th

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
190 S Main St, Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701

October 21st

Advent Lutheran Church
1601 Green Ln, West Chester, PA 19382

Training runs from
9:30AM – 4:00PM

Cost is \$30.00/per person

Pastors, please direct those
from your congregation who
wish to register, to complete
the application at
[LibertyLutheran.org/LEVT](https://libertylutheran.org/LEVT)

Or email the completed
registration form to Julia Menzo at
jmenzo@libertylutheran.org

to have anything by mouth. I faced
the choice to either retrain my body
or not live.

I talked with God, placing this in His
hands. I was ready to be with Him and
Christ but was asking for His will to be
done. I felt Him holding me and rocking
me in his lap. The next day, I was able
to take my first swallow of juice. I would
be cancer free for 22 years.

More Difficulties Ensued

In 2017, I needed a second radiation
treatment for a benign meningioma.
I successfully endured Gamma Knife
treatment but developed difficulty
swallowing.

Treatment that I had in 2000 caused scar tissue which was closing my
throat. In January of 2020, I had a tracheoscopy and a feeding tube was
put in. A different cancer was then discovered that was not operable.

I returned to Fox Chase, entered a clinical trial, and received immunotherapy
and radiation. Mercifully, I have been cancer free since then. The final
radiation treatment was on March 13, 2020—the day the pandemic was
announced, and the day I lost my ability to speak.

Technology Helps Me Communicate

For two years, I communicated using pen and paper which was limiting, so a
Penn therapist recommended that I use the Wego-Write device from Talk to
Me Technologies. This technology changed everything.

The “Wego-Write” device can be edited so that the Eucharistic Liturgy can be
saved to the Wego to be spoken upon demand. This opened up many possi-
bilities, and it put me back on track to do the training for lay
Eucharistic visitors.

With it, I knew I could further spread the Word to those I visit, highlighting
that they are valuable and missed at church! It would be another blessing
from our Father for me to serve them.

Trained and Certified to Serve Communion

When the training was offered last Fall, I decided to take it so that I may
visit and administer to those on Hospice and to other shut-ins. I was certified
along with another member of our church.

The side benefit of the training has been sharing of ideas regarding ways
that shut-ins can be of continued service through projects that utilize their
talents. Activities such as needlework, making phone calls, and sending
cards are examples of how they can care for others.

Other ideas include making gluten-free bread for Communion, or making
white pinnies with a cross on the front for infants being baptized to wear,
to signify their new identity as a child of God.

My Inspiration: God is Love, and His Mercy Endures Forever

I believe we must embrace God’s plan for us. People have said I am an
inspiration because I don’t act as if my condition troubles me. I hope to
inspire those who are homebound so that they, too, can keep a positive
outlook on their lives.

Having been blessed many times through my journey with cancer, I see my
trach and feeding tube as special blessings that enable me to breathe and
take nourishment. Though I still miss taking Communion, I mentally take it.
Giving it to others helps fill that void.

**“Unable to
eat or drink
by mouth,
I was also
no longer
able to take
Communion.”**

Recovery Continues from Hurricane Ida (Cont.)

no kitchen. We stayed for a while then went to a
hotel. Later we stayed at my other daughter’s one
bedroom apartment that she shares with my two
granddaughters. We were doing our best to make
our way and find a new place to live, but at that time
we could not find a place and I kept thinking how
unfair the situation was.”

Linda and Latania got connected when Latania
was still living in the crowded one bedroom with
her two daughters and two granddaughters. Since
then Latania was able to find an apartment for her
and her daughter and Linda has helped Latania
get \$5000 worth of furniture and appliances from
The Salvation Army. When she moved in, she
said “When we moved in all we had was two air
mattresses and a space heater.” She is happy that
she is still able to live in Chester, where she has
lived her whole life.

Latania said that Linda was like a gift from God
to her. Linda brought her hope and just someone
to walk alongside her. She said that getting that
email survey back in October, although she was
suspicious of it, was the first time anyone had
reached out to help her and her daughter.

A lot of people ask me why people didn’t seek out
more help early on; I asked Latania this question.
She said that she did apply for FEMA but did not
get much help and didn’t know what more to do.
She said she also tried to get help from some other
local community agencies but that they weren’t
able to help her. While we as LCS are working to
do better to partner with community agencies so
they can expand services when disaster strikes,
in many cases it is only from faith based disaster
programs like Lutheran Disaster Response –
Eastern PA that there is any safety net at all.
Thank you so much for the support you provide
so we are able to walk with Latania, while she
herself is doing the heavy lifting.

Linda puts it better, “It continues to amaze me
how grateful people are. They thank me for what
I have done but the bottom line is they are doing
the work.”

Reduce your 2023 taxes
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Gifts must be transferred directly to Liberty Lutheran.

For more information, contact Patty Cline by phone,
267-464-7720, or by email pcline@libertylutheran.org



Journeys Through Grief

MACUNGIE GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

April 12th, 19th, and 26th
May 3rd, 10th, and 17th

Wednesdays from 4:00 – 5:30pm

**SELLERSVILLE ST. MICHAEL'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH**

April 11th, 18th, and 25th
May 2nd, 9th, and 16th

Tuesdays from 6:30 – 8:00pm

TO REGISTER CALL Sylvia Havlish, 610-395-5045



THE SERVANT
c/oTheLutheranCenter
2354 Grove Road
Allentown, PA 18109



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God's work. Our hands.



Want to learn how to lay tile? Spackle holes in a wall? Hang dry wall?

Have you ever wondered how you can help those affected by Hurricane Ida and other disasters?

Join us on **Sunday, Sept. 10**
from 12:00pm to 3:00pm.

At the offices of the Northeastern Penn Synod,
2354 Grove Road, Allentown.

Join us for kit assembly and skills workshops.