

A Half a Century in and Excited for What Lies Ahead

Liberty's Lutheran Congregational Services (LCS) turned 50.

What started as chaplaincy service in the Lehigh Valley has grown into an educational and social ministry organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) serving congregations within the Northeastern and Southeastern Pennsylvania Synods of the ELCA.

From the beginning, LCS's ministries maintained a small staff with a strong network of congregations and volunteers willing to serve in the name of Jesus. Many congregations, ministries, leaders, and communities contributed to what makes LCS what it is today. They faithfully accompanied us to support social ministry programs and help tens of thousands of the most vulnerable.

In the coming year, we look forward...to looking back...on those 50 years. We will dig into the roots of Lutheran Chaplaincy Services of Lehigh Valley (1973), later renamed Lutheran Services of Lehigh Valley (1976).

Continued on pg. 3

Wandering Through the Wilderness

As a disaster case manager, Paulette Obrecht sees her most important role as wandering through the wilderness with survivors. She explains. "You show them that someone cares about what happened, and that allows them to move beyond despair towards hope."

"To do the job, you must listen; then, you listen some more. You help them find the missing pieces. At the same time, you prepare them on how to be ready if disaster strikes again."

"This role involves a curious mindset and a little serendipity. Throughout, you're asking questions, networking with others, and learning what's involved with recovery, such as the technical aspect of engineering a bridge. Then, you make a discovery, an unexpected connection, something that will help a survivor move forward. And at times it feels like the answers come out of the blue."

She's finding that relationships and networking lead to other survivors and resources. "While working with Pastor Mike at Prince of Peace to help a church member replace a private bridge, we discovered three additional bridges that were washed out by summer floods."

"I've observed that Lutheran Disaster Response and its partners in Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD) are adept at finding volunteers and resources, including funding to help survivors recover," she adds. "Government agencies also recognize VOAD's value. In addition to resources, these grass root organizations come to the table with idea people who can solve problems."

Paulette's background in education has prepared her well for disaster case management. She intuitively knows the right questions to ask and how to pull a thread to dig deeper. With her professional training as a pastor and hospital

Continued on pg. 3

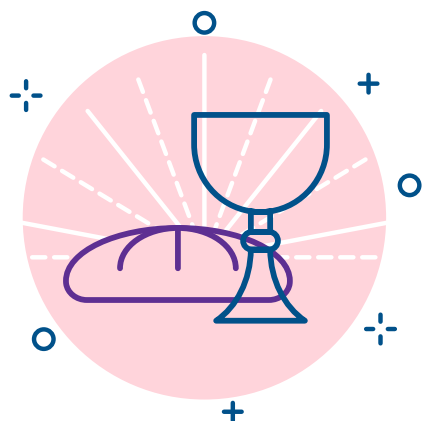


Above: Several, private bridges washed away during summer storms last year.



Left: Paulette works with veteran disaster case manager Linda Frey.

Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training



Stay tuned
for our
Fall Program

Scan the QR
code below to
view our website
for details.



Pastors, please direct those from your congregation who wish to register, to complete the application at LibertyLutheran.org/LEVT, or email the completed registration form to Julia Frank at JFrank@libertylutheran.org

Journeys Through Grief - From Ann's Perspective

Grief is not limited to the death of a loved one. People often experience it with any significant loss – a home, job, one's health, a relationship, or separation.

Ann knows grief in many forms, starting with the death of her younger brother when she was a child. She and her husband divorced when their daughter was just five. In 2011, her granddaughter was stillborn, dad passed in 2012, and mom followed in 2018. She's lost jobs due to various circumstances, needed to relocate several times, faced debilitating health issues, and said good-bye to 12 pets.

Her broken relationship with her daughter, however, brings her the most heartache. She misses her daughter and her five grandchildren. Nothing could have prepared her for that level of pain.

Ann first met Sylvia Havlish, grief counselor and facilitator for Lutheran Congregational Services, through the church. After an initial one-on-one counseling session with Sylvia, she later joined LCS's Journeys Through Grief, six-week program. Here's Ann describing her experience:

"Journeys Through Grief was very structured. I knew what to expect with each session, and Sylvia provided excellent material to reinforce what was covered.

To keep me grounded and to make sense of the world, I rely heavily on my faith and scripture. 'Be still and know' is an encouraging reminder from whom my strength comes. The fact that Sylvia wove prayer and scripture into the program was especially meaningful for me.

From the beginning, she set up a compassionate, trusting community within the group. The other participants and I were comfortable with one another right away, which made it safer to share."

Journeys Through Grief reinforced for Ann that grieving is an ongoing process that truly never ends. Managing triggers and feelings is part of her daily routine. She relies on her faith and uses what she learned to remain resilient. While she works toward reconciling with her daughter and grandchildren, she's also exploring an entrepreneurial idea related to pets. These bring her hope and a sense of purpose.



A Half a Century in and Excited for What Lies Ahead (Cont.)

We'll explore the ELCA's founding of Lutheran Disaster Response in Allentown (1988), with LS/LV becoming the appointed agency for disasters in the Northeastern PA Synod in 1998, thus, prompting a name change to Lutheran Congregational Services in 1999. In 2010, LCS joined Liberty Lutheran and expanded its ministry to the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

As we reflect on our history with congregational and community partners, we invite you to join us in helping to shape the second half of the century. Stay tuned for a report on one-on-one and focus group conversations we collected in the last year, as we will be looking for feedback on our conclusions.

We also invite anyone who is aware of sources of information on the history of Lutheran social ministry in eastern Pennsylvania/Lutheran Congregational Services to alert us to those resources! Pictures, documents, anecdotes, are all welcome!

Wandering Through the Wilderness (Cont.)



chaplain, she's also able to provide spiritual care to survivors.

Looking toward the future, Paulette sees an opportunity to motivate young people to get involved with disaster prevention, recovery and mitigation. She plans to suggest that Youth Gatherings within the local Synods of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) focus on disaster work as part of their baptismal call to get involved with justice issues.

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PRESENTS

PUMPKIN FEST 2024



SAT. OCT. 26TH
FROM 6:30PM TO 8:00PM
AT TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH



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THE SPOOK-TACULAR PUMPKINS
AND THE DECORATED TRUNKS
WITH THEIR TREATS.



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



LUTHERANCONGREGATIONALSERVICES.ORG



God's work. Our hands.



We'll be assembling and collecting disaster kits and hygiene kits!

Join us on **Sunday, Sept. 8th**

from 12:00pm to 3:00pm.

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

Learn how you can put these skills to work for
disaster response, or with other programs like Habitat
for Humanity, Appalachian Service Project, and
some projects at your own home!



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