



## AmeriCorps, Serving with Us!

**We are proud and thrilled to be welcoming an AmeriCorps Team to join Lutheran Disaster Response – Eastern PA and our PA Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster partners from March through mid-April 2025.**

This incredible team of 7 men and 3 women is rolling up their sleeves and making a huge difference in Berks, Philadelphia, and Delaware Counties. They're helping to rebuild homes damaged by the July 9, 2023 flooding and Hurricane Ida in 2021. Many of the team members



are new to rebuilding, but they've jumped in with enthusiasm! By the end of their first day, they were already crawling under mobile homes to replace insulation, and in other homes, they're hanging drywall and laying flooring—what an impressive start!

Addison Smith, the team leader from Ohio, is 25 and making sure everyone stays safe, learns new skills, and has a great experience.

Other team members also have unique roles. Ruby Meyer from Virginia is handling public relations, while Noe Burns from Colorado is gathering feedback from survivors to help improve our disaster response.

### **Hospitality for the team has been heartwarming!**

The Bridge Fellowship in Shillington, PA, and Salt and Light Church in Philadelphia are generously hosting them, and local churches and community groups have been providing delicious meals. One delightful surprise came from Nouvelle Naissance Baptist Church in Birdsboro, which lent the team a mini-bus for their stay in Berks County—how thoughtful!

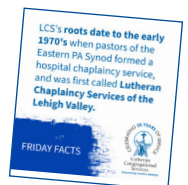
Beyond the hard work, the team is having fun exploring the local area and getting to know the community. They've been enjoying sights around Reading and Philadelphia, making the most of their time here.

AmeriCorps is a fantastic opportunity for young people looking to make a real impact while gaining valuable experience. Team members work in areas like environmental stewardship, affordable housing, and disaster response—and they earn money for college too! If you're between the ages of 18 and 26 and want to learn more, the team would love to meet with you while they're here. You can also visit [AmeriCorps.gov](https://AmeriCorps.gov) to find out more!

### **Celebrating 50 Years of Faithful Service and Community Engagement!**



As Lutheran Congregational Services celebrates this incredible milestone, we invite you to journey with us through the years with **#FridayFacts** on Facebook, reflecting on the impact we have made.



# Journeys through Grief

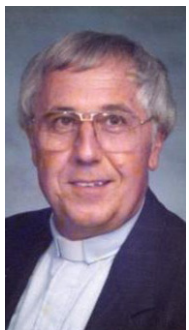


As we reflect back on 50 years here at LCS, and lift up ministries that bring hope to hurting people, we also acknowledge that collectively we grieve at times too.

Sylvia Havlish, LCS's bereavement counselor, leads a Facebook group called Journeys Through Grief. Recently she reflected on the grief that comes with the passing of a beloved pastor, in particular Pastor Fred Foerster, who passed away on December 31, 2024.

She wrote: "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my father's house are many rooms. If it were not so I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place that I am going." John 14:1-4

Sylvia continues, "I learned that beloved Pastor Fred Foerster, retired from St. John's Lutheran Church in Emmaus, passed into the arms of God. ... But I had no doubt in my mind that he was at peace with God in a heavenly home. He



was a pastor "for all people" ...not just the Lutherans...but anyone, anywhere who needed help and unconditional love.

He was an "action" pastor...he saw a need and took it on as his purpose to find a way to fill the needs. He was instrumental in encouraging me to begin a grief ministry through Lutheran Congregational Services over 50 years ago. He knew how to bring people together...and how to serve. He never gave up on a problem until he had gathered the people and the resources to handle it. I will be forever grateful for his leadership and the lessons he taught me in true social ministry."

In the comments to the post, people shared stories about Pastor Fred, and about other pastors for whom they felt similarly. Pastor Fred Foerster served as a LCS Board member for many years. We are grateful to all who have led, and who continue to advise us here at LCS.

Together we grieve many things, the loss of loved ones (including pets), jobs, the way things used to be, and more. Through this Facebook group, Sylvia creates space and opportunity for sharing on these topics and more.

**Search Journeys Through Grief on Facebook to join the discussion.**

## SPRING SESSION:

**Grace Lutheran Church in Macungie**

28 W. Main Street in Macungie, PA

April 22nd through  
May 20th 2025

Tuesdays from  
4:00pm – 5:30pm

**Registration required.**

To register or for more information, please contact **Sylvia Havlish by calling 610-395-5045.**

**Sylvia Havlish, M.Ed., will serve as Facilitator.**

Sponsored by:  
Bachman, Kulik & Reinsmith  
Funeral Home  
and Shantz Funeral Home



# Focusing Our Efforts Amid Federal Changes

Lutheran Congregational Services remains committed to supporting congregations, communities, and families in the name of Jesus. By God's grace, we are able to continue this work thanks to the generous donations from individuals and congregations, grants from the ELCA's Lutheran Disaster Response program, and partnerships with other like-minded organizations.

Since our programming does not rely on federal funding, we are not directly impacted by shifts in federal budget decisions. However, we are deeply concerned about how proposed changes in federal spending and policies could affect vulnerable populations in our communities. Individuals facing homelessness, housing instability, food insecurity, and poverty are among those at greatest risk of losing critical services. These individuals are also the ones who need our support the most during times of disaster, and we are called to care for them as part of our baptismal promises as Lutherans.

To guide our efforts, we turn to partners like the ELCA (Evangelical Lutheran Church in America) and Lutheran Services in America (LSA), who are actively monitoring these changes on a larger scale.

The ELCA Advocacy Office regularly issues action alerts, which provide policy analysis and offer practical ways for individuals to voice their concerns on critical issues.

Lutheran Services in America, the national network of social ministry organizations to which Liberty Lutheran is affiliated, unites leaders, partners, and funders to address key community challenges. LSA also provides valuable policy analysis on matters affecting seniors, immigration, Medicaid, and more.

During this time of significant federal change, Lutheran Congregational Services is dedicated to amplifying the messages of these vital partners and helping congregations access the resources they provide. For instance, on February 20, 2025, we hosted a webinar with Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa), where congregations shared community concerns and received updates from the ELCA Advocacy Office.

For more information on these partners, visit [elca.org](https://elca.org) and [lutheranservices.org](https://lutheranservices.org).



## Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training



**SATURDAY, MAY 17, 2025**

9:30AM-4:00PM

St. Michael's Lutheran Church

25 E Church St,

Sellersville, PA 18960

Scan the QR code below  
to learn more and register.



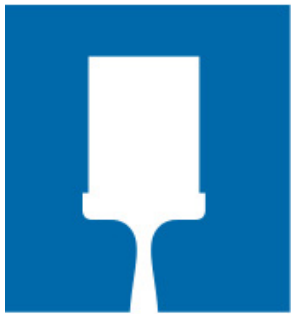
Pastors, please direct those from your congregation who wish to register, to complete the application at [LibertyLutheran.org/LEVT](https://LibertyLutheran.org/LEVT), or email the completed registration form to Julia Frank at [JFrank@libertylutheran.org](mailto:JFrank@libertylutheran.org)



LUTHERANCONGREGATIONALSERVICES.ORG



**God's work. Our hands.**



**SAVE THE DATE: September 14th  
at the Northeastern Penn Synod**

**We'll be assembling Clean-Up Buckets and Hygiene Kits.**

**Stay tuned!**  
Visit [www.libertylutheran.org](http://www.libertylutheran.org)  
for more information.