At Zion’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Perry Township, a new ministry continues to grow. In spring of 2014, a 75’ x 100’ patch of its property was tilled, and the Northern Berks Community Garden (NBCG) was begun. The NBCG is a nonprofit organization that was started in order to assist low and moderate income members of the community acquire healthy, locally grown produce through the local food pantry system. We are working to grow and donate vegetables such as cucumbers, yellow squash, cabbage, beans, peppers, beets, lettuce, tomatoes, kale, onions and more to the food pantries that serve the communities of Northern Berks County.

The idea to create a community garden at Zion’s came from then Interim Minister, Reverend Dr. Dennis Ritter. Pastor Ritter felt that “Zion’s is blessed with many resources/assets to do a project like this – broad agricultural knowledge, a willingness to serve their Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, a compassion for those who are struggling in life, a good well, and land that was sitting idle.”

Our 2nd season just ended, with a total of 8086 pounds of produce donated to local food pantries: 5858 harvested pounds, 593 additional produce donated to the Garden for distribution, and another 1635 pounds purchased from a local produce auction to add to our harvest. This is 2328 pounds more than last year’s produce donations to those in need. The Northern Berks Food Pantry serves approximately 120 families each month.

This season we have been pleased to expand our local deliveries through the Keystone Military Families Pantry, Shoemakersville, and the Salvation Army of Hamburg.

Our Monday morning and Thursday evening work days were not only a time of planting, watering, staking, and harvesting, but a time of fellowship for those involved. Garden tips are given, family news is shared, and fun is had by all that come to share their gifts.

We have been truly blessed by the outpouring of support from our congregation members, Zion’s Church Council, and local churches, businesses, organizations, and community members who have supported us with financial contributions and in-kind donations of seeds, plants, tools, and labor. We also applied for and received a $500 grant from the Synod Witness and Service Team. The grants are funded through Synod wide Mission Support (benevolence) giving. If you are interested in information, please contact us at communitygarden@zionslutheran.org or check online at zionslutheran.org/community-garden.

Find more stories of how we are doing God’s work with our hands at: nepasynod.org or visit our facebook page Mission Interpreters of NEPA Synod.

Garden Helps Feed the Hungry

Your Mission Support Dollars helped this ministry!

Dollars helped this ministry!