

SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

More Stories of Being the Church in a Time of Pandemic



Masks for Health Care Workers

Kourtney Keim from New Life, New Tripoli is a sophomore at Northwestern Lehigh High School. Seeing a need for protective gear for healthcare workers, she organized a community effort to make and distribute masks and headbands.

"It reminds me of the story of the fish and bread where the collections of few created plenty for many. Some members of our group could sew beautifully but had no material. Some had material and no sewing machine. Some had a machine, but not the skills or time

to use it. Some had fabric, others thread, still others (the coveted) elastic. Some had time to cut or money to donate materials. All of these efforts came together to provide more than 7000 masks, and counting."

Masks were donated to Lehigh Valley Health Network, St Lukes Health Network, KidsPeace, visiting nurses, Children and Youth Centers, dialysis centers, rehab clinics, homeless shelters, banks, grocery stores, and others. They have continued to donate to various healthcare workers as well as provide masks available to the general public. Asking for a \$5 donation to a local food pantry in exchange for a mask, they've raised over \$5,000 in just a few weeks - while helping to keep everyone safer.



Muhlenberg Chaplaincy Responds to the Pandemic

The worldwide coronavirus pandemic has shown how very important our grounding in the Lutheran theological tradition lived out in a multi-faith environment has been. At the forefront of decision making, has been the care and support for all people, including students, faculty and staff. While most students left campus by March 16, around 100 students initially remained for various reasons (30 will remain on campus for the summer). In some cases, they are international students unable to travel to their homes, or students with no primary residence outside the college. During the pandemic, the work of the Religious and Spiritual life team of the college has been grounded in a collaborative effort with many different colleagues, to provide care, counseling, support and programming for students online—as well as actively supporting students who have remained on campus.



Here is the story of one student, Kate Ekanem, who remained on campus. "Since the outbreak, I've honestly been in a constant on and off panic mood. I am a first generation student, a single-mother to a six-year-old daughter, and an international student from an economically underserved family in Nigeria. It is the first time in many years that I'll feel like I don't have anything under control because I am afraid of failing in my usual responsibilities to myself, my child and my elderly father back home.

"Since the pandemic, the college has gone beyond what's expected of any institution to express genuine care and love for students like me on campus. I have seen love, felt it deeply, and I cannot begin to explain how my heart bursts in joy to have a school that cares

The Food Pantry at Friedens, Oley

For almost 30 years, **Friedens, Oley** has been serving the surrounding community by hosting a Food Pantry. Allowing clients to enter the building, grab a grocery cart, and shop through the aisles of food was our mode of operation. All that changed during the pandemic! Like many congregations, we struggled how to allow this vital, life sustaining ministry in the midst of fear, regulations and hope. 75% of our food pantry volunteer force were identified as falling in the "most at risk" category. This included our food pantry directors! We did not want to put anyone in danger!

We decided to invite folks in the "least at risk" category to help us continue this important ministry. Our young people stepped up and volunteered with the understanding that strict safety standards and regulations would need to be followed. There was no hesitation! The volunteer hours were long, noon to 8pm. There was unloading trucks, repackaging food into boxes, delivering food to waiting vehicles and clean up all while maintaining physical distancing and wearing a mask and gloves. No time for rest while we created a new way of serving the community.



I like helping with the food pantry because unfortunately, so many people need it. Ethan Hohl (9th grade)



I like that we are helping with the food pantry during COVID-19 because people need food! Jacob Hohl (6th grade)



The Covid 19 pandemic caused me to come home from college. , I was pleased for this opportunity to serve in my community. -Jenna Reed (senior in college)



My grandparents and Mom work during the regular food pantry. Since I do not have school or sports, I have time to help! Kristina Kauffman (10th grade)

Lunch for a Homeless Shelter



St. John's downtown Easton was asked by Safe Harbor Homeless Shelter to provide 24 bagged lunches for people who usually come to the shelter to eat at noon but are not residents of the shelter. Because of the virus and fear of spreading, a table is set up at noon at Safe Harbor and the take away bagged lunches are available (and taken) by people who stop by. Some are homeless, some are temporarily sleeping at the homes of friends, some are food insecure. St. John's adjusted how the lunches were made as the rules of social distancing evolved. They began making the meals every Wednesday at the church and then started making the lunches at individual homes. Vicar Matthew picks the lunches up and transports them to the shelter. The program began March 25 and will continue until Safe Harbor no longer requests the help.

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