# NEPA Synod Green Team

e-newsletter #5, Spring 2023

ELCA Logo in sassafras leaves.
Created by Pastor Inge Williams at Friedens Lutheran Church, Shartlesville on October 13, 2021

## Welcome to our newsletter!

We present to you this collection of prayers, tips and ideas on caring for God's creation, book reviews, news about and from notable places within the synod, advocacy opportunities, and inspirational stories of good work being done on our territory.

Any questions or comments on this newsletter would be appreciated – please send them to pwmetzloff@gmail.com.

Please feel free to share this with anyone who would be interested!

**A Prayer for Spring**

by Pastor Carl D. Shankweiler

Dear God, we are ready for spring! The parade of flowers from crocus to daffodils, hyacinths to tulips, adds bright colors to accent an increasingly green world. We so enjoy the warmth and the first showings of buds! Even the occasional sound of a lawnmower is good to hear again.

We are so accustomed to asking you for help that we sometimes forget to give you thanks. Spring is one of those times when thanks should be automatic, spontaneous, authentic. We can all be grateful for days spent outdoors without coats, for lower heating bills, for the opportunity to plant onions and peas, and for the awareness that the bounty of summer is at hand.

But we do still ask, praying for those whose limitations keep them from going outdoors, whose allergies bring renewed struggles to breathe, and whose fear of thunderstorms makes them cower. Every season brings challenges for some of us. May we always help one another meet those challenges, especially in this time of new and renewed life as the annual celebration of Easter confronts us with abundant, resurrected, eternal life with God and others. In Jesus name, Amen.

# PORTICO Green Impacts

Did you know that PORTICO offers Social Impact First (SIF) investments as a part of our retirement plan? Here are just some of the effects that these have had recently (in 2021):

**Avoided 130.6 million metric tons of $CO_2$-equivalent emissions**
Equivalent to the annual emissions from 35 coal-fired power plants

**Saved 4.3 billion kilowatts**
Equivalent to energy used by 599,721 homes for a year

**Added 3,934 megawatts of new renewable energy capacity**
Equivalent to the output of 1,311 large wind turbines

**Generated 36.9 million megawatt-hours annualized of renewable energy**
Equivalent to powering 3.1 million homes for one year

**Constructed 31 LEED*-certified buildings**

**Conserved 670,997 acres of land**
Roughly equivalent to three times the size of New York City

**Supported 2 million people with clean water and wastewater projects**
Roughly equivalent to the population of Nebraska

**Delivered 44 million gallons of water per day**

**Saved 179.2 billion gallons of water**
Equivalent to 1.4 times the amount of water in Lake Erie

Check out the options by logging in to your PORTICO retirement account, and do some good with your savings!

## Inspiration: Water Unites Us Together

Having completed Pennsylvania Master Naturalist training in the Autumn of 2019, I was excited to begin a service project at Saint Paul's Orwigsburg with which to donate 'required' volunteer hours. As our worship always contains care for the environment in our prayers, I wanted to make that as much of an action ministry as the town food pantry, clothing drives and other outreach ministries.

Our first big event - Earth Day's 50th anniversary - was all set to go with a focus on water, but by March 2020, with the pandemic, we packed it away and prayed for the wellness of the world.

This year, we were even more excited to be able to offer an Earth Day event, and we offered it to church members, libraries groups, Scouts, town churches and even Synod-wide. On the menu was a morning filled with interactive fun:

- fingerpainting a very long strip of brown paper as a river scene
- 'fishing' for creatures of our local Schuylkill River habitat, using a blow up pool ("The Watering Hole") and pictures to catch
- displays about water realities: microplastics, the proportion of fresh water as compared to salt water on earth
- many activities around the story of Noah
- a large whiteboard for folks to write reflections, questions, concerns on
- a room set aside for re-enacting baptism
- a water tank of real living tadpoles and salamanders from a local pond
- hands-on "experiments' about water run-off and another about exactly where a water drop might travel in its journey through the water cycle.

Also on display in our lounge were ELCA world relief efforts for getting clean water to as many as possible and the NEPA Synod's Green Team newsletter. Our sanctuary windows were filled with lines from hymns reflecting aspects of creation, and a few creatures too. We filled every available space!

Snacks were blueberry mini muffins, water (in reusable tumblers), and watermelon. Extra helpful was that we used a Thrivent Generosity grant, and had a banner and extra art supplies, even kerchiefs for people to use and keep rather than throw away napkins.

A fair number of folks came - and stayed the whole morning. We have planted the seed, and there will be more next year . . . but the best take-away was that SO MANY volunteers got on board, from the elementary school age boy who made us Lego buildings for the water runoff scene, to a college man who brought us the tadpoles, to folks who couldn't attend doing the cutting out of needed shapes for crafts. *The water and the Spirit really did bring us together!* Our closing song, gathered around the "watering hole", was "I've got peace like a river, love like an ocean, JOY like a fountain . . . in my soul."

Can't wait for next year!

Joyously submitted, Sue Reier

## Book Review

As people of faith, we're used to hearing from the Biblical prophets – folks like Isaiah and Jeremiah, Micah and Hosea, Ezekiel and (my personal favorite) Amos – let justice roll down like water!

We often consider Jesus in his prophetic role, as he most certainly followed in this tradition, and spoke with added authority as the Son of God.

And, perhaps, we look at some within our own time as speaking prophetically – Martin Luther King, Jr. is often described in this way as he confronted racism and segregation.

I would submit that there are several folks within the modern environmental community who are also prophets, and one of the foremost is a young girl from Sweden, Greta Thunberg.

In 2018, when she was 15, Greta began spending her Fridays outside the Swedish Parliament to call for stronger action on climate change. This eventually became the School Strike for Climate movement.

Thunberg was given the opportunity on several occasions to speak to the public and to political leaders and assemblies, and this small book is simply a record of several of her early speeches. While it is at times repetitive (as are Isaiah and Jeremiah, actually), it is clear that she speaks with passion, eloquence, and a straightforward anger at the lack of action on the most important issue of our time.

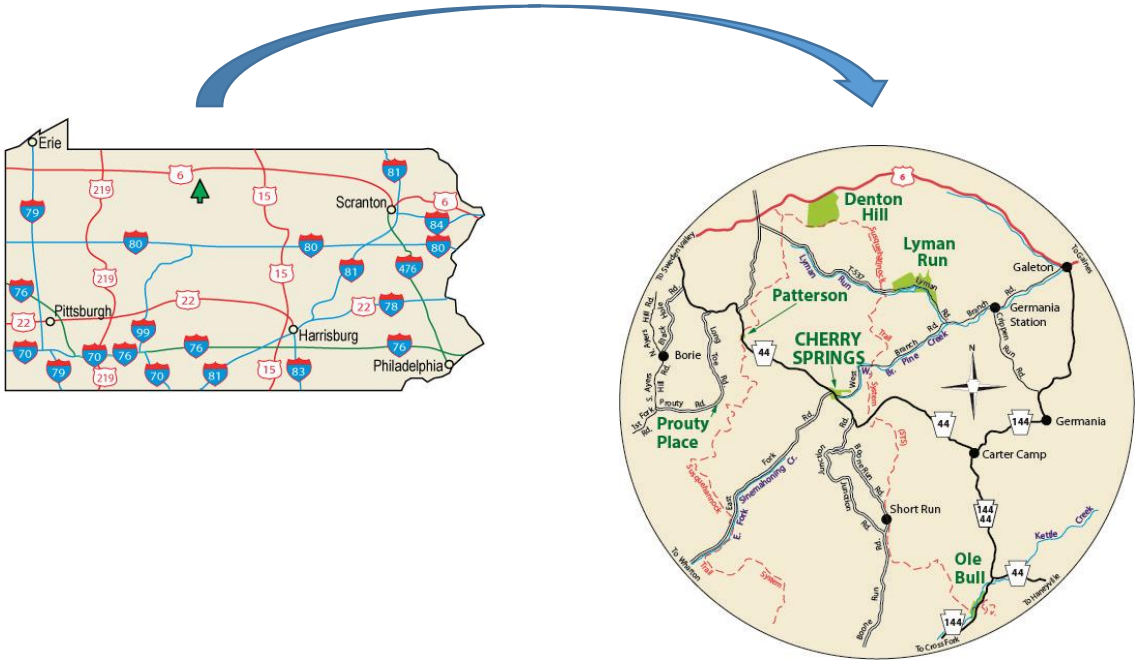
What else would we expect from a prophet?

## **Notable Places:** Cherry Springs State Park

Did you know that Pennsylvania is home to one of the few internationally recognized 'Dark Skies' parks in the eastern United States? It is – Cherry Springs State Park in Coudersport, PA. While not on the synod's territory, it's reasonably close, and is an exceptional place to see such heavenly phenomena as:

- Planets
- Nebulae
- Galaxies
- Stars
- Other heavenly bodies

Cherry Springs State Park offers a wide variety of environmental education programs year round, and weather permitting, a park educator or guest speaker presents public stargazing programs in the Night Sky Public Viewing Area and amphitheater.




More details can be found at:

https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/StateParks/FindAPark/CherrySpringsStatePark/Pages/default.aspx

## Advocacy/Action:

A great opportunity:

### THIS CERTIFICATE OFFERS

A cohort-based, online, trans-continental curriculum which empowers participants to cultivate moral, spiritual, and practical power for leadership in the work of climate justice in communities of faith and in collaboration with others. Topics covered include theology, ethics, and spirituality related to climate justice; climate change knowledge; and social change practices that connect ecological well-being with racial, economic, and gender justice. Six Continuing Education Credits are offered upon completion.

### EXPECTATIONS

- 2-4 Hours of weekly Independent work
- 2 hours of monthly virtual cohort meetings
- Participation and collaboration with local initiatives, congregations, and/or groups to ensure context-based practice of concepts learned in class
- Willingness to take on the work of climate justice as a spiritual practice within sphere of influence
- Proficiency in English and access to reliable internet connection

### THIS PROGRAM IS FOR

Anyone who is interested in learning about and acting on faith-based climate justice initiatives within their context – and who wants to explore spiritual grounding for that work – will benefit from this accessible opportunity. This non-degree learning program is 100% online via virtual live cohort sessions and interactive digital learning platforms. We especially encourage applicants from populations most affected by climate change and from member churches of the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).

### CONTACT

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### TUITION

$600, scholarships up to $550 available

### SCHEDULE

Two 15-week semesters beginning mid-September and ending early May

www.centerforclimatejusticeandfaith.org

Center for Climate Justice and Faith
Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary

Lutherans Restoring Creation
Cultivating Hope & Healing for All

ELCA World Hunger

THE LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION

Be sure to check out our table at the upcoming Synod Assembly!

And thanks for reading!  If you're interested in being a part of the synod's Green Team, please see our page on the synod website at [www.nepasynod.org/green-team](www.nepasynod.org/green-team).