

September 2023 Article.

Annual Day of Service Recognized by Local Lutheran Churches

On Sunday, September 10, congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) will join together for an annual day of service for “God’s work. Our hands.” Sunday. Over 8,900 congregations across the country will engage in a dedicated day of service in their local communities. “ God’s Work. Our Hands.” (GWOH) is an annual program scheduled on the second Sunday in September where thousands of members engage in service work to make a positive change in local communities, to build and deepen relationships and to share God’s love. This year marks the 10th anniversary. The special programs planned for GWOH Sunday are in addition to the various on-going charitable programs offered by each congregation such as food banks, free clothes closets, visiting home-bound individuals and more. Many local Lehigh, Berks and Northampton County Lutheran churches are active in GWOH day of service and host a broad variety of programs. Here are just a few of the planned service programs among local congregations.

St John’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Allentown, Lehigh County is hosting their ‘God’s Work. Our Hands’ event on September 17th. The congregation is collecting donation of new pajamas and gift cards for events like movies, Lehigh Valley Zoo and others for Pinebrook foster children. After worship, congregation members will enjoy a Pot Luck luncheon and then assemble pajama and gift card donations, work on tying quilts for donation through Lutheran World Relief and write cards to be shared with our military members overseas.

Nativity Lutheran Church in West Allentown, Lehigh County (next to Wegmans) will come together to love their neighbors and make the community a better place on “God’s Work. Our Hands.” Sunday September 10. Between the 8AM and 10:30AM services, they will host an intergenerational service project hour where members will engage in the following:

Prepare Thanksgiving meal kits for foster and kinship care families at Diakon and for families served by our Meal Ministry at Roosevelt

- Prepare bag lunches for police officers serving with the Allentown Police Department
- Prepare hygiene kits for children at Hays Elementary School
- Fill backpacks with school supplies for children at Sheridan Elementary School

Following the 10:30AM service, the congregation will share a meal and move into the community and serve in various projects including:

- Play bingo with the residents at Above and Beyond at the Knights
- Lead a worship service at Cedarbrook and transport residents to and from the worship service. S
- Central Elementary School: weeding, trimming of shrubs/tress to refresh the property
- Dobb Elementary School: Back garden boxes need to be weeded and perennials planted and mulched.
- I-Heart Harvest: Picking potatoes at I-Heart Harvest delivering them to local shelters and food pantries
- Sisters In Stitches will Knit and crochet heart monitor pouches for patients at local hospitals
- Help clean up after a Tails of Valor fundraiser event
- Tree planting: Location is yet to be announced

- Union Terrace Elementary School: Yard work to spruce up the property

Jordan Lutheran Church in Orefield, Lehigh County will host their “God’s Work. Our Hands.” activities on October 17th. The congregation has been proudly and actively involved in GWOH as service to others emulates what we have been asked to do...giving generously to others who will benefit from our selfless time and talent. Following the 10:30AM worship service, the congregation will participate in a Launch Luncheon followed by service activities including:

- Wrapping of Holiday Hope Chest (Shoe) Boxes that will then be distributed by the youth to be filled by our congregation. These boxes will then be presented to youth within the valley that have so little yet are equally deserving.
- Letter writing campaign thanking various 1st Responding Lehigh Valley organizations for their valuable and appreciated service. These men and women extend themselves for us often without receiving an appropriate thanks.
- Sing-Out to Shut-ins. An invitation is extended to our congregation to visit our shut-ins members on October 15th and carol to them much as we would at Christmas. The songs chosen will be familiar, often non-secular selections encouraging those at home and in nursing facilities to join in the singing.
- Blanket Brigade will again be providing vibrant children appropriate, hand assembled blankets for the young patients who are isolated at the Reilly’s Childrens Hospital. This popular service project has provided over 100 blankets to various organizations within our Valley who have benefited from the Brigades generosity.
- Providing kitchen assistance at the Allentown Rescue Mission on October 15th. Our responsibilities often entail re-organizing their pantry, emptying and sorting donation boxes and general kitchen clean-up.

Redeemer Lutheran Church in Allentown, Lehigh County will host their “God’s Work. Our Hands.” service project on September 10. The membership sees their GWOH project as an opportunity to join together, use our hands to serve and share God’s love with others. They will begin with a brief opening in the sanctuary at 9AM. Thereafter, the congregation will assemble 100 school supply kits for kindergarten classes at Muhlenberg Elementary School. In addition, they will sign Christmas cards for deployed members of the U.S. military. The Christmas cards will be distributed by Keystone Military Families, a volunteer organization in Shoemakersville, PA.

Zion Lehigh Evangelical Lutheran Church in Alburtis, Lehigh County has, for its second year, participated in reaching out in love to others through collecting personal care items, snacks and room decorating items for the Lutheran Home at Topton. The collection of donated items includes Chocolate Bars, Snacks, new stuffed animals, seasonal door decorations, solar-powered dancing characters, construction paper, wooden shapes and signs on which to do crafts, body wash, deodorant, after shave, toothpaste, tooth brushes and tissues. These items will be shared with the residents and used for various activities.

On Sept. 10th, the congregation will pack up all the boxes for delivery to the Topton Lutheran Home and celebrate with a Thrivent Action Team sponsored covered dish luncheon. By reaching out to help elders in our community, we want to act as Jesus’ hands, as he told his followers in a parable, that when they cared for those in need, they were caring for Jesus himself.

Grace Lutheran Church in Macungie, Lehigh County will mark the 10th anniversary of “God’s Work. Our hands.” with a service project where all ages are invited to participate. The congregation will assemble personal care kits for Lutheran World Relief to address the needs when families find their homes

destroyed or must flee for their safety leaving with nothing but the clothes they wear. The items in a Personal Care Kit provide much needed care, critical germ fighting supplies and the chance for our neighbors in need to regain dignity amidst fear and uncertainty. The congregation will collect donations of light-weight dark colored bath towels (20"x40" and 27"x52"), bath bar soap in original wrapping (8-9 oz), adult size tooth brush, sturdy comb, metal nail clippers. With a goal to assemble 100 kits, the congregation will meet at 9AM to assemble the kits which will be blessed at the 10:30AM worship service before they are shipped overseas.

Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bangor, Northampton County will conduct their "God's Work. Our Hands" project jointly with the Northeastern Pennsylvania (NEPA) Synod. The congregation is collecting items, cash donations and received a Thrivent Team Grant to purchase items to assemble essential personal care kits needed when disasters happen. A group of members will travel to the NEPA Synod office in Allentown on Sunday, September 10 to participate with other congregations to assemble the personal care kits. In addition, they will also attend presentations to learn skills to help when clean up and rebuilding needs happen after communities have experienced loss due to a disaster.

Christ Lutheran Church in Hellertown, Northampton County is hosting their "God's Work. Our hands" event on Sunday, September 17 with a variety of service projects including Bingo, Communion Service and Ice Cream Social for Seniors, September Brunch with Hellertown Police, Hymn Sing at Saucon Valley Manor, Soup Making for New Bethany Ministries and Youth Yard work for Seniors. The congregation is also collecting brand new stuffed animals until September 30 for Lehigh Valley Health Network – CC Pediatric Outpatient Surgery Center and St. Luke's Childrens Hospital, a food drive for New Jerusalem Food Bank and Senior Yard Work project on Sept. 9, Harvest & Pack Garden Produce on Sept 15th and Habitat for Humanity Build on Sept 26th.

Robeson Evangelical Lutheran Church in Mohnton and Renewed Spirit Lutheran Church in Reading, Berks County will hold a joint outdoor worship service followed by a picnic at Stonecliff Park in Reading on September 10 beginning at 10:30 a.m. The Lutheran World Relief Personal Care kits will be assembled following the service. Both congregations have been gathering items for the Personal Care kits and are doing this as a joint "God's Work. Our Hands." project. Thrivent Action Team Grant seed money will be used toward this project, enabling purchase of items to fill in what's needed for the kits.

St. John Lutheran Church in Mohnton, Berks County has several service projects planned including:

Backpacks filled with school supplies to be distributed to the Mifflin Food Bank at Zion Evangelical Congregational Church, Mohnton. The families that use the food bank will have the opportunity to pick up a backpack for the upcoming school year for their children.

Stephanie Stoudt Memorial Garden – an annual project of garden maintenance and flower planting for the Kline family – congregation members - in honor of their daughter

Personal care packages for the clients of Guardian Services Pennsylvania – to assist this agency whose mission is to provide compassionate, personally managed care that supports the health and wellness, financial stability and legal rights of their clients.

Personal care packages for The Berks Coalition to End Homelessness which began as a volunteer group in 1955 to end homelessness in Reading and Berks County

Package and deliver fruit baskets to homebound congregation members

St, John's Lutheran Church in Saint John's, Luzerne County is hosting a Craft/Vendor/Yard Sale on September 9th as their "God's Work. Our Hands." service project to raise funds to make a contribution to support the historic Brainerd Church and Cemetery Association located in 95 N. Main Street, Sugarloaf, PA. Brainerd Church is a historical attraction with history dating to 1840 when residents in the area formed the Church of Conyngham. The church building was completed in 1853 and named after Rev. David Brainerd, a Presbyterian missionary to the Delaware Indians in the 1740's. Closed in 1955 following Hurricane Hazel and reopened in 1983 through the efforts of the Greater Hazleton Historical Society, today Brainerd Church hosts services on special occasions. Area residents enjoy the history and memories shared by families who attended the church and attend services when provided.

Northeastern PA Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America in Allentown will be hosting a service project at the Synod office for "God's Work. Our Hands." Sunday, Sept. 10 from 12 noon to 3 PM. The service project will benefit Lutheran Disaster Response to help disaster survivors near and far. Teams will assemble and collect Disaster Kits, Flood Buckets and Hygiene Kits. There will also be demonstrations on how to rebuild after a disaster for safety and basic construction skills. Information will be available on how to put the skills to work during a disaster or with other programs including Habitat for Humanity, Appalachian Service Project and others. More information is available at libertylutheran.org.

Church Contacts:

St John's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Eric Gombert (egombert@sjat.org)
37 S 5th St.
Allentown, PA 18101
Phone: 610.435.1587

Nativity Lutheran Church – Kim Ring (info@nativityallentown.org)
4004 W. Tilghman St.
Allentown, PA 18104
Phone: 610.395.5062

Jordan Lutheran Church – David Mancke (dbmsncke@gmail.com)
5103 Snowdrift Rd.
Orefield, PA 18069
Phone: 610.395.5912

Redeemer Lutheran Church – Pastor Cynthia Rader Geyer (pastorc@redeemerallentown.org)
802 N. 19th St.
Allentown, PA 18104
Phone: 610.434.1291

Zion Lehigh Evangelical Lutheran Church – Donna Gerhart (churchoffice@zionlehigh.org) and Pastor Jane Kropa (gawain2324@gmail.com)
8269 Spring Creek Rd.
Alburtis, PA 18011
Phone: 610.395.1215

Grace Lutheran Church – Pastor Samantha Drennan (sldrennan1@gmail.com)
28 W. Main St.
Macungie, PA
Phone: 610.966.3325

Prince of Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church in Johnsville - Georgia Suranofsky
(georgiasuranofsky@hotmail.com)
2445 Lake Minsi Drive
Bangor, PA 18013
Phone: 610.588.2355

Christ Lutheran Church – Enid Rank (nurse@clcht.org), Phil Spohn (pspohn@clcht.org)
69 Main St.
Hellertown, PA 18055
Phone:610.838.0400

Robeson Lutheran Church – John Lauer (johnwmlauer@gmail.com) and Debbie DeMarco
(ddemarco@dejazzd.com)
3520 Plow Rd.
Mohnton, PA 19540
Phone: 610.856.7242

Renewed Spirit Lutheran Church – Debbie DeMarco (ddemarco@dejazzd.com)
449 N. 9th St.
Reading, PA 19601
Phone:610.375.9216

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church – Mary Naugle (nauglemary@yahoo.com)
1 Front St.
Mohnton, PA
Phone: 610.777.9985

St. John's Lutheran Church – Melody Hinderer (melva56@yahoo.com)
772 St. Johns Rd.
P.O. Box 2
St. Johns, PA 18247
Phone: 570.956.5709

Northeast PA Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Church of America – Heidi Shilanskas
(hshilanskas@gmail.com)and Julia Menzo (jmenzo@libertylutheran.org)
2354 Grove Rd.
Allentown, PA
Phone: 610.266.5101