



NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Growing New Communities of Faith: Updates on SAWCs, SAOMs, and Mission Leadership

Written by: Deacon Kat Tigerman, NEPS Directors for Evangelical Mission



Every year, the Synod Council re-authorizes our Synod-authorized ministries, typically in October. It is also a great opportunity to hear updates from these ministries, the people they are serving, and the stories of their communities. It is always a powerful testament to God among us – often in ways we might consider “non-traditional” – ministries made possible by our NEPA congregations’ mission support and the mission support to the ELCA.

Synod-Authorized Worshipping Communities (SAWCs for short) are communities committed to worshipping together but who may do so outside the normal “walls” of the church. A SAWC may look like a recovery worship service, dinner church, messy

church, or church on the streets. SAWCs are also communities discerning and taking steps to become formal (known as “organized”) ELCA congregations. They are led by a Mission Developer. Our NEPA Synod currently has 3 SAWCs: Common Ground in Wyomissing, Common Ground in Reading, and the Indonesian Lutheran Church of Scranton (which just became a SAWC in September!).

Synod-Authorized Outreach Ministries (SAOMs for short) are ministries committed to evangelism, outreach, and discipleship. A SAOM may look like a food truck ministry, a small group ministry, or a prison ministry. They are led by a SAOM Leader. Our NEPA Synod currently has 2 SAOMs: Free to Be in Bethlehem and Hope’s Table in Reading. Free to Be is a ministry dedicated to reaching out to moms, families, and folks in recovery by building intentional small groups on the road of faith and discipleship. Hope’s Table was initially a SAWC but is in the process of transitioning to a SAOM. While Hope’s Table continues to offer weekly worship, it is a feeding ministry which builds community and creates a safe and welcoming space for all to find the love, grace, and warmth of Jesus.

Each year, to help support these leaders and connect them to one another, the ELCA hosts a Mission Leadership Training Conference for Mission Developers, SAOM Leaders, Strategic Ministry Leaders, and key leaders of various SAWCs and SAOMs. This year Seminarian April Mulvey was invited to attend as a Mission Developer Scholarship recipient along with Deacon Kat Tigerman as DEM. 118 leaders from across



the country attended the 3-day training in Chicago the last weekend of September.

The first week of October, the Region 7 DEMs (Directors for Evangelical Mission) hosted a 2-day retreat for Mission Developers, SAOM Leaders, and other new ministry leaders. There were 35 participants across the 6 Synods of Region 7 who came together to worship, reflect, connect, learn, and pray. The Retreat was facilitated by the ELCA's Organizing for Mission who grounded the time theologically as well as provided practical on-the-ground skills and tools for these leaders are the margins and cutting edges of Church. NEPA Synod participants included:

- Rev. Lauren Applegate, Free to Be
- Seminarian April Mulvey, Hope's Table
- Rev. Tom Scornavacchi, Common Ground
- Deacon Kat Tigerman (DEM)
- Rev. Dr. Jennifer Hope-Tringali (Director for New Ministries).

Region 7 was blessed to receive an ELCA grant to help make this retreat affordable to leaders who are serving ministries on the margins. Our Director of New Ministries will be piloting a learning opportunity in early 2026 to work alongside leaders who have a new ministry idea that they want to develop into a plan of action. Interested leaders are encouraged to email Pr. Jennifer at jennifer@nepsynod.org.



Thank you for all you and your congregations do to pray for and support these leaders and these ministries across our Synod and across the country!

DID YOU KNOW that your Mission Support helps fund areas of the synod and ELCA like this one and many other important initiatives? Your contributions are making a significant impact and helping others grow in faith, supporting the synod's lanes of Growing Young, Gaining Strength, and Going Beyond Death to Life, along with the directions of loving like Jesus, healing like Jesus, and engaging like Jesus. To learn more, visit godslove.org/missionsupport.

SAWC & SAOM

godslove.org/sawc-saom

Want to learn more about the NEPA Synod's Synod-Authorized Worshipping Communities and Synod-Authorized Outreach Ministries? Visit our website for details.

