

# SYNOD NEWS

NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD, ELCA

## MINLAB 21

**How has your church been able to: Heal the Hurting, Love the Land, and Engage the Stranger?**

Learn new ideas to take home and try. And show and tell others about the "vital signs" you've seen "growing" in your midst through God's grace, love and care in your community. On August 14th we will also go deeper into ways the "Growing Young" movement across our Synod is making a difference and changing the ways we are growing as a Jesus-centered community.

We hope every congregation will send at least two participants, to learn and share and grow. **Join us August 14, 2021**

**Sign up online at [Godslove.org](https://Godslove.org)**



## Christian Freedom vs. American Freedom

As we gather this month to celebrate July 4<sup>th</sup> and the **Freedom** ascribed to us as citizens of the United States of America, we often think of the individual freedoms that we 'hold dear.' Those "I" statements regardless of impact on another. We must understand these notions of what freedom means for us as **Lutheran Christians** and how we celebrate freedom *from* and *for*. We often see freedom as *from* something: oppression of speech, restriction of arms, etc. However, when God talks about freedom, God speaks of freedom *for* one

## Meet Laurie Christman

Born and raised in Allentown, I now live with my husband of 31 years, two young adult sons, and one tortoiseshell cat in Lehigh Township, Northampton County. Hobbies flow with the seasons - gardening, reading, jigsaw puzzles and upcycling crafts.

During office hours, you'll find me at the front desk in the Lutheran Center. I enjoy answering the phone and greeting folks when they visit. If I don't have the information you need, I'll track it down or connect you with the right person. When you do your yearly congregational report, I'm the person that makes sure we have a copy in the synod's record. I keep the roster of people and congregations updated as well. My most challenging task is scheduling supply pastors for congregations in transition, as there seems to never be enough pastors.



another. Jesus states the 'greatest commandment' is to *love one another as he (Jesus) loves us* (John 13:24-25). This biblical freedom, is one which Luther encouraged others to share. The promise that God engages us in freedom for one another. **To build up community** by strengthening relationships with one another and with God. The diversity by which we have been created is something that is meant to offer strength not divide. Luther spends a lot of time with Paul's letters, and the language of the **Body of Christ**. *We are all members of Christ's body, together, united, with differing views, even on the understanding of Freedom.* While we are different we are united. The same blood flows through us all." Luther quotes Romans 6:4 in the Small Catechism to support the above claim: "We were buried with Christ through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too, are to walk in new life."

Let us celebrate this nation's day of independence both from oppression, and for the love of one another: that we may see the unity in the diverse makeup of our nation, which strengthens our resolve as community, to live into the Body of Christ more fully every day.

*Pastor Zach Labagh, Lead Pastor at Allegheny Evangelical Lutheran Church, Knauers, PA*