

SECTION E – REPORTS OF SYNOD RELATED AGENCIES

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DIAKON LUTHERAN SOCIAL MINISTRIES



We sincerely appreciate and celebrate our partnership with the Southeast Pennsylvania Synod and its congregations. United in purpose and guided by compassion, Diakon extends its services to individuals of all ages. In 2024, Diakon programs served close to 68,000 people.

Diakon Youth Services aids teens from Delaware and Chester counties. Programs such as Bridge serve those ages 11 to 18 by providing accountability-focused counseling and monitoring programs to prevent out-of-home placement. Participants sometimes are served by the Weekend Alternative Program, located at the Diakon Wilderness Center near Boiling Springs in Cumberland County. Diakon also operates a Youthful Offenders Program, which focuses on young adults from Bucks County; those who successfully complete the program can have their felony charges reduced or eliminated. Close to 100 youth in the SEPA synod territory were served by one of these programs.

Diakon Family Reunification and Preservation Services continued to grow throughout the year, aiding both children and families in Bucks and Delaware counties. The reunification program is designed to assist children and youth in out-of-home placements such as foster or residential care in their transition home. The intensive family preservation program serves children returning home from foster care, residential or other out-of-home placement to ensure the reunification's success. In 2024, the two programs served over 500 children and families in the SEPA synod territory.

Additional services within the synod include Diakon Adoption & Foster Care, which works with resource families to meet the needs of waiting children and teens in Bucks, Montgomery, Delaware and Chester counties. Separately, Diakon continues to manage Pennsylvania's Statewide Adoption & Permanency Network, or SWAN, meaning Diakon plays a role in all public adoptions in the Commonwealth. In 2024, that work had an impact on the lives of over 7,600 children, youth and family members throughout the SEPA Synod.

We thank God for the gifts of our staff, volunteers, congregations, donors, and board members, whose dedication and generosity enabled us to touch the lives of thousands of people last year.

Shari VanderGast, *President/CEO*

GEMMA SERVICES



SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD ASSEMBLY REPORT, 2025

Gemma Services was formed in 2019 by the merger of two long-standing Philadelphia-area nonprofits: Silver Springs – Martin Luther School and the Village. Each of them was founded in the 1800s as orphanages and evolved through the years to meet the growing needs of their communities. Today as one organization, Gemma represents 300+ years of service to youth and families facing extreme challenges in the Greater Philadelphia area.

Guided by the vision of a world where every person knows they matter, Gemma Services' mission is to accompany people of all ages through life's challenges using individualized, data-informed support. With three locations in Greater Philadelphia, Gemma assists more than 3,000 youth and families each year through mental health, child welfare, prevention, and education programs.

Gemma's programs include:

Residential Treatment Program – The Residential Treatment (RT) Program provides 24/7 clinical treatment and trauma-focused care for children and youth between the ages of six and 14 years old who need an intensive out-of-home placement due to the severity of their emotional and behavioral challenges. **Last year, 104 youth participated in this program.** Youth are referred to us by a medical professional once determined that their behaviors are presently not safe enough for them to live in a home setting. These behaviors might include self-harming, aggressiveness,

sexualized behaviors, and more. Most of the youth have experienced significant traumas including physical and/or sexual abuse, neglect, abandonment, family violence, and more.

Our RT provides a holistic environment that embraces a trauma-informed approach to help youth to heal and strengthen their coping skills so they can return to live safely and successfully in their homes and communities. Each child's family and caregivers are included as full partners while they participate in the program, however approximately one-third of the youth we assist in this program have no family involved in their lives.

The RT Program provides therapeutic living environments that include individualized treatment, supervision, care, and nurturing for each youth. Our approach includes outcome-oriented treatment, psychiatric evaluations and medication management as necessary, trauma-informed therapies, case management, behavior management, and health care. While in our care, we provide for the youth's clothing, mental health, and physical health needs. Additionally, our programs include therapeutic activities programming to ensure that the youth experience joy and opportunities for creative expression.

Community Based Programs – During FY 23/24, our Community Based Programs assisted **2,294 children, teens, and families and/or caregivers** through our Philadelphia offices in Mt. Airy and Southwest Philadelphia, as well as virtually. Our Community Based Programs include:

- **Adoption & Permanency Services** are provided for children and adolescents who have experienced loss, separation, abuse, neglect, and other trauma. These services are for children who have been placed in the homes of foster or kinship families because their legal families currently are unable to provide the care they need.
- **Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA)** services are based on the science of learning and behavior and involve the process of implementing basic behavioral interventions to create meaningful behavior changes. ABA services are typically provided to children, youth, or young adults diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and include assessments and 1:1 interventions to help them improve their behavioral, social, communication, and adaptive skills.
- **Family Based Mental Health Services (FBMHS)** is an intensive, data-informed, and family-focused approach to support children, adolescents, and their families. The primary goal of Family Based Services is to assist families with maintaining their child in the home and to keep families intact, rather than an out-of-home placement for the child. FBMHS provides intensive individual and family therapy, as well as case management support in a family's home and community by a two-person team.
- **Foster Family Care** includes services for children from Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia Counties who cannot reside in their own homes presently. The program works with families, county agencies, educators, and others involved in the life of a child, teen, or young adult to identify the best possible home for their unique needs.
- **Intensive Behavioral Health Services (IBHS)** offer intensive support in home and school settings for children, youth, and young adults up to age 21 experiencing serious emotional or behavioral struggles or skill deficits. Our IBHS program is designed to give each child the tools they need to face challenges with a greater sense of strength and resilience and improve overall behavioral functioning.

- **Outpatient Mental Health Services** include individual therapy, family therapy, and medication management for children and teens, ages 2 to 18. Credentialed therapists use evidence-based practices including Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) and Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) in working with children and teens.
- **Prevention Services** include our **Family Empowerment Center**, **Family Support Program**, and our newest program, **LaunchPAD**. The goal of these programs is to support youth and families to overcome challenges, strengthen community supports, and prevent further involvement with the child welfare system.

Martin Luther School – During FY 23/24, 267 students attended Martin Luther School, located on our Plymouth Meeting campus. Martin Luther School (MLS) is a Pennsylvania Approved Private School that provides a comprehensive special education program with social, emotional, and behavioral supports for K-12 students. Students are referred by more than 45-area school districts and the state of Delaware once their home school district has identified them as having severe emotional difficulties and determined that they would benefit from an out-of-district placement with intensive supports to help them meet their social, emotional, behavioral, and academic goals. Additionally, approximately half of the students who participate in Gemma’s Residential Treatment Program attend Martin Luther School.

Your Partnership – More than 50 Lutheran congregations of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod actively support Gemma Services as we accompany youth and families. We are grateful for these generous and supportive partners. Relationships with congregations of other denominations, individual friends and supporters, community groups, and philanthropic foundations combine to comprise a mosaic of support that demonstrates “ferveat love is an action.” Gemma Services is proud of our founding (as Silver Springs – Martin Luther School) as a Lutheran Social Ministry Organization and pleased to share that Kristen Gay, Ph.D., President and CEO of Gemma Services serves on the board of Lutheran Services in America.

To learn more about our programs, please visit www.gemmaservices.org. If you would like to schedule a visit to one of our locations or learn how you can become more involved in Gemma’s work, contact Amanda Bryant, Director of Donor and Volunteer Engagement, at (610) 825-4440 x3307 or Abryant@gemmaservices.org.

We are grateful for your partnership. Thank you for helping us work toward creating a world where every person knows they matter!

GLOBAL REFUGE

Section E, Addendum 1

LUTHERAN ADVOCACY MINISTRY IN PENNSYLVANIA

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania (LAMPa)

Church together in Pennsylvania for the sake of the world God loves

In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, we advocate for wise and just public policies in Pennsylvania that promote the common good. Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania is a shared ministry of seven Pennsylvania synods and ELCA Service and Justice. Through LAMPa, Lutherans called to be part of God's healing and reconciling mission in the world are supported to voice their faith convictions in the public square with and on behalf of our most vulnerable neighbors and the world we share, while seeking to create a more just Commonwealth.



Bishop Bryan Penman and all of Pennsylvania's ELCA bishops stood with religious leaders across the state for a press conference at the Capitol to unite for peace during the election season.

In 2024, LAMPa celebrated 45 years of advocacy ministry with gratitude for a legacy of community building and justice seeking while looking forward in hope for a more just world. We successfully worked together to pass state legislation addressing poverty, housing insecurity, climate change and massive inequity in education funding. We equipped people of faith to stand against hate, to bridge divides and work for peace. We trained and organized to prevent political violence and protect vulnerable neighbors.

As 2025 began, I completed my service to the ELCA task force developing the social statement on Faith and Civic Life, and pray that its work will strengthen our ministry together now and in the years, ahead. As marginalized communities are under attack and safeguards for human rights, religious liberty and human and environmental health are increasingly threatened, LAMPa is striving to connect and equip increasing numbers of disciples who are seeking to respond faithfully in their communities and with state and federal policymakers.

I give thanks to God for you and for the support of our Southeastern Pennsylvania Synod Policy Council representatives, Bruce McCullough and Carl Hylton.

With deep gratitude for all the ways in which you support LAMPa's ministry,

Tracey DePasquale
LAMPa Director

LIBERTY LUTHERAN



Artman

Paul's Run

The Hearth at Drexel

The Manor at York Town

The Village at Penn State

Lutheran Congregational Services

LCFS West Philadelphia Senior Community Center

Synod Assembly Report 2025

Mission Statement

Liberty Lutheran faithfully accompanies individuals and families who are facing life changing situations through an empowering approach that honors their choices and well-being.

At Liberty Lutheran, we are profoundly grateful for your partnership. With your prayers and support, you help transform lives and provide vital assistance to those who are most in need. As we look to the future, we are energized and inspired by the work ahead. Your continued dedication empowers us to move forward with excellence and create lasting change. Thank you for making this possible!

Benevolent Care: A Lifeline of Hope

When residents in our senior living communities face financial hardship, remaining among friends and loved ones is essential for their well-being. The Benevolent Care Fund ensures they can continue to thrive in the communities they call home—even when their financial resources are depleted.

Each year, Liberty Lutheran provides more than \$1.5 million in benevolent care across our communities. While the monetary value is significant, the peace of mind and security it brings to our residents is truly priceless.

Building Resilient Individuals & Communities

Organizational Dollars to Continue Services where Shortfalls Exist

\$1,565,500

Benevolent Care

\$16,126,500

Unreimbursed
Medicare and Medicaid

\$17,692,000

Total Expenses

Snapshots from Our Senior Living Communities

Each of Liberty's five senior living communities is flourishing in its own unique way. Here are just a few highlights from the past year:

Artman – Ambler, PA

Located on Bethlehem Pike in Ambler, PA, Artman provides personal care, long-term skilled care, memory care and short-term rehabilitation care.

Last November, a former storage space was transformed into *The Corner Store*—a small shop making a big impact. Stocked with essentials like toiletries and snacks, it has also become a vibrant hub for connection, conversation, and volunteering.

This year also marked the 40th Anniversary of the Artman Golf Outing in support of benevolent care. The event, started in memory of Stuart Johnson and with the guidance of the late Pastor Tom Kadel, has raised nearly \$2 million since its inception.

The Hearth at Drexel – Bala Cynwyd, PA

Located on Belmont Avenue, The Hearth at Drexel offers assisted living and memory care services.

Residents benefit from six domains of life enrichment, one of which includes gardening. This activity provides cognitive stimulation, sensory engagement, and social connection.

In the Inspiring Today Memory Care program, residents tend a raised outdoor garden filled with vegetables and herbs. Meanwhile, Assisted Living residents enjoy planting in pots and baskets on their household patios—fostering joy, purpose, and community.

The Manor at York Town — Jamison, PA

Adjacent to Warwick Township Community Park, The Manor offers boutique-style living for independent residents.

Daily life at The Manor centers on wellness, with amenities like shuffleboard, bocce, a heated indoor pool, and walking paths. At the heart of this wellness culture is John Miller, the dedicated fitness director. Under his guidance, residents stay active in body, mind, and spirit.



Paul's Run — Philadelphia, PA

Situated on Bustleton Avenue in Northeast Philadelphia, Paul's Run is a continuing care retirement community offering independent living, personal care, rehabilitation, and skilled nursing care.

This year, Paul's Run welcomed a new Executive Director, Frank Beech. With nearly 25 years of experience in senior care, Frank brings strong leadership and a deep passion for creating vibrant, life-enriching communities.

The Village at Penn State — State College, PA



Located at Penn State University, The Village offers independent living, personal care, and skilled nursing.

Exciting developments are underway with the planning of the Nittany View Villas—two luxury apartment buildings featuring 10 homes each with garages and exclusive amenities. The villas will include a top-floor clubroom with a terrace offering breathtaking mountain views, along with wellness boutique spaces and

proximity to walking trails and woodlands. This new addition promises to enrich the Village lifestyle with elegance, nature, and community.

Highlights from Liberty's Life Services and Ministries

Lutheran Congregational Services

This year, Lutheran Congregational Services (LCS) is recognizing the work we have been doing together with congregations and community partners over the last 50 years! More than ever we are committed to helping congregations and individuals live out their baptismal promises.

As part of the Liberty Lutheran family of services, our programs include disaster response, Lay Eucharistic Visitor Training, bereavement support programs, and related educational programs like adult forums.



LCS staff are available to lead adult forums and other educational sessions around topics related to bereavement and disaster response. And as we have in past years, we'll soon begin seeking writers for the annual Liberty Lutheran/LCS Advent Devotional.

Lutheran Disaster Response – Eastern Pennsylvania

LDR-Eastern PA is currently leading efforts for long term recovery in Berks County following severe flooding in July 2023. Pastor Tom Irwin represents Berks County Lutherans on the Antietam Valley Long Term Recovery Group and Pastor Paulette Obrecht is still working with households with washed out bridges following other storms that same summer. Thank you Pastor Irwin and Pastor Obrecht!

By July 2024, we identified 30 active homes still in need of major repairs. The average cost per home was about \$8,000. Thanks to our volunteers, who provide critical labor, we've been able to reduce that average cost to just \$4,400 per household.



One of the most significant contributions came from an AmeriCorps team, who spent three weeks rebuilding homes in Berks County this past March.

On Tuesday April 15, 2025, LCS received word that to be in alignment with the Trump-Vance Administration priorities and Executive Order 14222, the AmeriCorps team deployed to Berks County and Philadelphia supporting our flood recovery efforts

was to be demobilized immediately. While the team was to be with us for another week, they left for their home base on Wednesday morning, April 16.

We are saddened by the premature farewell to this team and the loss of the AmeriCorps program overall.

Recovery continues in response to Hurricane Ida (2021) in Philadelphia, Delaware, Montgomery and Bucks Counties.

Want to help? We can use volunteers to make call backs, staff resource centers, and do rebuilding. Use your Thrivent Action Team Grants to provide volunteers with lunches and supplies. You can also join us for Gods Work Our Hands Day on September 14, 2025 when we'll be making flood buckets and clean up kits at the Northeastern Penn Synod Office.

LCFS' West Philadelphia Senior Community Center

WPSCC was awarded a \$13,500 grant by the University of Pennsylvania's Community Collaboration for Co-Creation (Penn4C) to participate in an innovative project.

Through a partnership between the Penn Nursing and Engineering schools and the WPSCC community, the project aims to build an AI-driven virtual platform to lead community members

through a series of Qigong finger exercises, then track their progress and health benefits. The goal is to enhance the overall well-being of older adults with disabilities and make the exercises engaging, accessible, and sustainable

Respectfully submitted by Julia Frank, Director of Community Outreach,
on behalf of Liberty Lutheran. jfrank@libertylutheran.org

LUTHERAN ARCHIVES CENTER AT PHILADELPHIA

Section E, Addendum 2

LUTHERAN SETTLEMENT HOUSE

When you visit Lutheran Settlement House—and if you haven’t visited yet, we’d love to see you—you’ll meet people for whom this work is a personal mission. Our tagline, Community, Compassion, Change, speaks to the values we share as an agency; we hope you see these values, and your own values, reflected throughout this report.

We’re guessing there will be numbers that jump out at you, like the 5,802 people we served last year; the 356,884 pounds of food that became meals for hundreds of families; the 2,856 children, teens, and adults who received domestic violence counseling; the 213 people, including 147 children, who called our emergency family shelter, Jane Addams Place, home. These numbers speak to the critical and urgent need for our work. When you read beyond the numbers, though, you’ll have an even better understanding of our impact.

Across our programs, many of the people we serve struggle with feelings of isolation. The remedy, we believe, is community. And this annual report is a testimony to the power of community to heal, to strengthen, and to transform lives.

At Lutheran Settlement House, community manifests in many different ways. It’s people gathering for meals, focusing on their health together, and sharing their hopes and fears with one another. Our partnerships—with hospitals, colleges, churches, and fellow social service agencies—are also about community, because we are so much stronger together. Volunteers and donors give their time and resources to be part of something bigger than themselves, something life-giving and life-saving. To be part of a community.

We’ve been doing this work since 1902, so we know there are always new challenges to confront. Our longevity gives us clarity. We know why we are here, what we believe, and for

whom we fight. We also know that we can't do it alone. We are so grateful that you are part of our community and that you share your compassion with those we serve. There is so much hope and joy in the change we create together.

Client Voices

The community at Lutheran Settlement House, the change that's possible, and the compassion at the heart of our work is because of the people we serve. Their dreams, their joy, and their future are what drive our work forward.

- “The staff at Jane Addams Place treated my family with love and respect. They were there when I needed them.” –Robin, Former Jane Addams Place Resident
- “When you're at Lutheran Settlement House, you laugh and you joke. When you go home, you still have that smile on your face.” –Andrea, Center Member
- “After coming to Lutheran Settlement House, I felt alive. I'm happy. I'm a totally different person.” –Mylinda, Domestic Violence Survivor
- “I lost my job earlier this year. Things got really tight, and we couldn't afford to purchase food. This pantry helped us survive.” –Robert, Food Pantry Visitor
- “They gave me time to heal, to feel love again, to concentrate on my children. I had the chance to grow.” –Trevor, Former Jane Addams Place Resident

Impact Data

Older Adults

For adults 55+, the Center offers a range of programming for right now and for what's next. Members can explore fitness and dance classes, personalized health coaching, volunteering to help others, creative arts, trips and excursions, digital literacy classes, healthy cooking, and more. Members learn new skills, meet new friends, and plan for the future.

201: Members of our Center for older adults

71: Center members volunteered at Lutheran Settlement House

337: Exercise classes offered, leading to 89.2% of members being more physically active

11,964: Meals served to Center members, with 88.6% of members eating healthier meals

133: Members utilized health and wellness services

65%: Learned a new skill

Homeless Services

Jane Addams Place, our family shelter, helps families entangled in the housing crisis to heal from the trauma they have experienced, to explore housing and employment options, and to plan for the future they want and deserve.

213: People called Jane Addams Place home, including 147 children

32,760: Nourishing meals served

6: Average months' length of stay

16: Infants and babies attended early intervention programs

37: Children received onsite healthcare through our partnership with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP)

Food Access

Our food pantry provides fresh food and nutritional support to food-insecure families, teens, domestic violence survivors, and older adults. Open five days a week and six hours a day, our pantry is among the most accessible and responsive in Philadelphia.

356,884: Pounds of food distributed

15,164: Visits to the pantry

324: Thanksgiving meals distributed

135: Clients connected to benefits programs

Education

Education is woven throughout all of our programs. At Lutheran Settlement House, and via programs delivered in collaboration with partners across the city, children, teens, and adults grow their skills and knowledge to build the lives they want and deserve.

1,189: Professionals trained in domestic violence education

817: Children and youth participated in domestic violence prevention programs

327: Hours of educational, art, wellness, and social-emotional learning for children living at Jane Addams Place

149: Instances of school advocacy for children experiencing homelessness

50: Technology classes taught to older adults

383: One-on-one technology tutoring sessions with older adults

Bilingual Domestic Violence Program

Established nearly 50 years ago, our Bilingual Domestic Violence Program (BDVP) provides lifesaving services to nearly 4,000 women, men, children, and non-binary people each year, including counseling, housing support, hospital-based advocacy and training, and violence prevention education.

3,379: Hotline calls answered

- 2,856:** Children, teens, and adults received counseling
- 87:** Families received housing support
- 191:** Systems advocacy efforts at 11 healthcare sites across the city
- 33:** Trainings to 10 hospitals, reaching 628 healthcare providers

Program Highlights

Last year was a year of expansion and collaboration. We expanded the depth and scope of our partnerships to bring creative programming to vulnerable and strategically overlooked communities, including queer and trans youth, and older adults. We collaborated with researchers to center client expertise in the research process. And, we rolled up our sleeves and got our hands dirty harvesting fresh produce for families experiencing homelessness. These highlights showcase our commitment to amplifying client voices and nurturing meaningful partnerships that extend our impact.

Nourishing our Community: In Fishtown, we operate one of the most accessible food pantries in Philadelphia. Throughout the year, we're open Monday-Friday 9am-3pm, and between April and October, we host a free weekly pop-up grocery store and farm stand. This year, we saw increases in the number of older adults and Spanish speaking Philadelphians relying on our food pantry to get by. In 2024, 52% of pantry visitors were 65 and older. As the cost of living in nearby neighborhoods continues to soar, our food access work is more important than ever.

Voguing and Healthy Relationships: Queer and transgender people face higher rates of intimate partner violence than cisgender and heterosexual people; however, they're often left out of the conversation about domestic violence. This year, we partnered with the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's (CHOP's) POSSE program to provide healthy relationship resources to hundreds of dancers and performers involved in Philadelphia's House and Ball Community. POSSE is comprised of mostly queer and trans youth of color (with some pretty fierce dance moves) who are also learning how to prevent abuse in their relationships and community.

Gardening with a Purpose: Living in shelter is especially difficult for teens. Not only are you sharing a room with your entire family at a time when you're craving independence, but finding a job and making new friends are all more difficult when living in a shelter. Our new teen gardening project was designed with these challenges in mind. With support from members of Reformation Lutheran Church in Media, teens learned employment and interpersonal skills, spent time outside, built new friendships, and grew fresh produce for the shelter kitchen to use at dinnertime. For most of the teens, this was their first paid job and their first time eating vegetables they grew themselves.

An Intergenerational Storytelling Project: Last spring, our Center for Older Adults partnered with students at Kensington Creative & Performing Arts High School on a photography and video project: The Beauty of Time, linked [here](#). Over several months, students visited Lutheran Settlement House to interview and photograph Center members. Not only did the project help forge new relationships between Philadelphians several generations apart, but it also allowed us

to celebrate our community and learn new things about old friends. Oh, and the students also won \$20,000 for their school in the process! Read more about the award [here](#).

Client-Centered Impact: Being a client-centered organization means that we try to understand our work through the eyes of the people we serve. Are we providing what they need? Do our clients feel welcome and safe? Are they getting the support and resources they need to work toward physical, emotional, and financial health? We have always evaluated our programs, but our new Director of Data and Evaluation is bringing everything together to help us understand the depth of our impact and continue to grow by listening to the people we serve.

Domestic Violence Research: Our domestic violence Research Advisory Board is comprised of survivors, staff, and researchers who work together to center survivor expertise in the research process. This year, we partnered with the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) and Jefferson Health System to design studies that prioritize access—making research participation easier and research studies more diverse. We also collaborated on studies that address gaps in services, including one study focused on developing co-parenting resources for survivors. Our goal is to make research studies more inclusive, while compensating survivors for sharing their expertise. We believe that more inclusive research leads to more equitable policy.

Volunteer Spotlight: Volunteers make our work possible. Last year, 490 people volunteered 9,705 hours of their time to stock our pantry, host fun activities in our Center for older adults, sort and organize donations in our family shelter, and beautify our spaces so that everyone who walks through our doors feels welcome. Starlene, a retired Fishtown resident, volunteers a few hours every day, making sure our community has access to fresh and nourishing food. Lutheran Settlement House helped Starlene when she needed it most, so now she likes to spend her days helping others. If you’ve been to our Fishtown site in the last year, you’ve most likely been greeted by Starlene!

Get Involved

We would love to meet you and the people in your congregation. Below, we’ve included a few ways that you can get involved with Lutheran Settlement House; we’re also open to your ideas!

Invite us to speak: We’d love to visit your church, give a temple talk, or speak to adult or youth education groups. To invite us to speak, contact David Chiles, dchiles@lshphilly.org.

Volunteer: We have volunteer opportunities for both individuals and groups, including youth groups. To explore volunteer opportunities, contact Dana Barnes, dbarnes@lshphilly.org.

Come for a tour: A great way to connect to our work is to come and see it in action! We’d love to host you for a tour. To schedule a tour, contact David Chiles, dchiles@lshphilly.org.

Make a gift: Financial contributions help sustain and grow our work. Collections also help stock our food pantry and provide essentials like back to school supplies for the children in our programs, and comfort kits for children and youth entering our family shelter. To learn about our current needs, contact Erica Zaveloff, ezaveloff@lshphilly.org.

This report was prepared and submitted by Lisa M. Jacobs, Grants & Communications Manager on behalf of Lutheran Settlement House.

RELIGIOUS LEADERS' COUNCIL OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

Dear Saints of SEPA Synod,

One of the partnerships that our Synod invests in is the Religious Leaders' Council of Greater Philadelphia. The Council was founded in 2006 to build relationships of mutual support, offer a moral and spiritual voice in the region, and identify issues of local concern for dialogue and action. The Council is one of the Interfaith Philadelphia programs. You can learn more about Interfaith Philadelphia at <https://www.interfaithphiladelphia.org>.

The Council includes senior leaders from thirty-six diverse religious traditions, including our Bishop, The Rev. Bryan Penman. Altogether, the Council represents more than two million people of faith in the greater Philadelphia area.

Two Highlights from this past year include:

- In the Fall of 2024, the Religious Leaders Council launched a month-long Peace and Civility Series focused on communicating a powerful message of unity, healing, and respect. Each week from October 1-November 5, a new video message or prayer was released featuring leaders from Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Sikh, and other faith communities. These videos and prayers invited those in our region to reflect on and embrace values of civility and mutual respect in a season that is often marked by division. You can view the videos on Interfaith Philadelphia's YouTube Channel at <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PL-kQtBsBDNXVIIAe5iqSxkOpd6EqHJg5c&feature=shared>.
- The Council also partnered with Philadelphia United for Toll the Bell, an initiative organized to raise awareness and honor victims of gun violence. This city-wide event engaged over 40 regional partners for a midday vigil service at the Annenberg Center in West Philadelphia, featuring prayers and reflections, including one from former Bishop, The Rev. Patricia Davenport. Following the vigil, bells and other sources of sound echoed across the city and region for five minutes to remember victims of gun violence and call people to action.

Looking forward to the year ahead, the Council and SEPA Synod will once again participate in Toll the Bell on June 6, 2025, at 1:00 PM, as we recognize National Gun Violence Awareness Day. All are welcome to meet at the Annenberg Plaza of the University of Pennsylvania at 12:00 PM for prayers and reflections. Following the vigil, those gathered will walk to the Episcopal Cathedral as the bells ring for ten minutes, recognizing the 106 deaths daily to gun violence.

All are invited to learn more about the Religious Leader's Council and Interfaith Philadelphia and their programming for youth, congregations, organizations, and businesses in our region to promote interfaith learning and engagement on their website or by contacting me at ffowler@trinitylansdale.com.

Respectfully Submitted,

The Rev. Fritz Fowler, Bishop's Liaison for Interfaith Affairs

SEAFARERS INTERNATIONAL HOUSE

Section E, Addendum 3 and 4

WOMEN OF THE ELCA (WELCA)

Report to the Southeastern PA Synod Assembly 2025

SEPA Synodical Women's Organization of the Women of the ELCA

SEPA's Women of the ELCA synodical board is small but mighty! We have been working internally to improve and rebuild our connections, resources, and forms of communication, while planning events for 2025 and 2026. In fulfillment of our mission to mobilize women to act boldly on their faith in Jesus Christ, the members of this board are committed to represent the purpose of the Women of the ELCA, and to support all women at the Conference and Congregational Unit levels.

In May of 2024, WELCA women managed the Ingathering for Lutheran World Relief at Synod Assembly. Thank you to everyone who donated quilts and kits, and to the Assembly for blessing the donations before they were transported to the LWR warehouse in Maryland. We've been blessed to offer this service to the synod for roughly 10 years.

In June, we held our Synodical WELCA Convention at Trinity Lutheran Church in Lansdale. Our theme of "Love One Another with the Promise of God's Justice" was based on Hebrews 10:24-25 – *"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, encouraging one another"*. The day began with a devotion by Reverend Fritz Fowler, followed by a presentation about Feast of Justice from their representative, Cheryl Lafferty. The Executive Director of Women of the ELCA, Linda-Post Bushkovsky, assisted with a presentation on WELCA; she chose to join us before retiring in July, after more than 20 years of service to WELCA.

Members of the WELCA synodical board joined many others in celebrating Bishop Davenport at her Retirement Gala in August, and at Bishop Penman's Installation in September. After meeting with Bishop Penman in October, we look forward to building stronger relationships with him and the Synod Staff in the future.

No conference events were held in the Fall of 2024. Like so many organizations, the pandemic resulted in lower numbers of participants at every level of WELCA, and conference events have dwindled. However, we did have several opportunities to meet in the Spring of 2025: In addition to a conference event centered on the life of Katie Luther, SEPA women met at a celebration of National Quilting Day in March, and a Women's Retreat at Bear Creek Lutheran Camp in April.

Our next WELCA event will be a Gathering for all women of the Southeastern PA Synod on Saturday, June 7. This year, we'll meet at Reformation Lutheran Church in Media. Our theme of the day is "She Said Yes", inspired by Mary's response in Luke 1:37-38. The day will be a celebration of Mary, Katie Luther, and every woman who has said yes to a challenge, whether in their personal life or for work. Our speakers will include Pastor Alina Gayeuski, Pastor Martha Kriebel, and retired Bishop Patricia Davenport. The program will include worship, workshops, activities, lunch, and more. Registration forms are available at our table in the Assembly Mission Center and on MinistryLink. In the spirit of trying new things, this year we're also offering a program for children 12 and under (advance registration is required to ensure sufficient staff). Please join us for a day of faith, fellowship, food, and fun!

We plan to resume Conference events this Fall. For anyone interested in planning and/or hosting a conference event, please contact any member of the board – our email addresses are listed on our MinistryLink page. We're also looking ahead to the Triennial Convention and Gathering for Women of the ELCA in July of 2026. The Convention will be held virtually, but the Gathering will be in-person in Des Moines, Iowa. More information on this transformative event will be revealed in July. The Triennial theme is "I am worthy", based on Psalm 139:14.

On June 13, the churchwide expression of WELCA will mark the 500th wedding anniversary of Martin and Katie Luther by celebrating the end of a 3-year capital campaign to raise \$1,000,000 for our "Katie's Fund" endowment. Grants from Katie's Fund provide opportunities for programs that will resonate with women today, to ensure the future of WELCA into the next century. It's nearly impossible to share all the work that has been done over the last 12 months by the women of this synod, let alone report on the ministries that exist at the churchwide level because of women in congregations all across the United States and the Caribbean who live out the purpose of Women of the ELCA daily:

"As a community of women created in the image of God, called to discipleship in Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit, we commit ourselves to grow in faith, affirm our gifts, support one another in our callings, engage in ministry and action, and promote healing and wholeness in the church, the society, and the world."

To all our sisters, on behalf of the Board of the Southeastern PA Women's Organization of the Women of the ELCA: We are here to support you. Together, we can accomplish great things.

Peace and hope,

Joy Grace

President, SWO Board of Southeastern PA Synod

Women of the ELCA