

# SYNOD NEWS

## Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

### Rally To End Racism



On Wednesday, April 4, the National Council of Churches led a rally in Washington DC to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. A small group from Hope, Cherryville, led by Pastor Brian Rajcok, joined the Lehigh Valley Council of Churches' bus trip down.

They left at 4:00 A.M. and arrived at the National Mall around 8:30. The official rally began at 9:00, but there had been a worship service going on since 8:00. They heard prayers from a variety of faith traditions, including a Zoroastrian priest. This portion ended with a Confession for the church's complicity in dealing with issues of racism.

The rally's M.C. was an African American pastor from Chicago. Speakers discussed a variety of issues including systematic racism, police brutality, white privilege, and mass incarceration. Some notable speakers included the current pastor of MLK's church, the Rev. Raphael G. Warnock; actor Danny Glover; Black Lives Matter leader, DeRay Mckesson; and Ben Cohen & Jerry Greenfield, who gave a moving speech on white privilege.

One powerful phrase from DeRay Mckesson stood out: that racism is able to adapt and manifest itself in different ways: from slavery, to Jim Crow laws, to present day mass incarceration. Others reminded the crowd of what MLK called the triple evils of our society: poverty, racism, and militarism; and they called on the church to do more in confronting these evils.

Pr. Rajcok writes: "I left the rally feeling particularly drawn to educating myself and others about mass incarceration and doing my best to help deconstruct this current manifestation of systemic racism. I was honored to be present that day. It was a day I will never forget."

### Confirmation Day at the Synod



On Sunday, April 22, over 90 youth and 42 adults gathered at The Lutheran Center for Confirmation Day at the Synod. Organizers Anja Stuckenberger, Inge Williams, and Seth Noggle were excited about the size of the response, with nearly twice the expected number attending. This year's theme was "One Church under one God."

Taking advantage of the wonderful spring weather, the event began with a time outside dedicated to getting acquainted. This was followed by the keynote presentation from Pr. Kurt Garbe, Associate of the Bishop. Pr. Garbe spoke about the four companion synods to our Northeastern PA Synod: Argentina and Uruguay, Saxony, Slovenia, and the South Central Diocese in Tanzania.

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Next the attendees rotated among five groups for a time of experiential learning. Four of the groups dealt with each of the four companion synods; and the fifth group was devotional, providing time for meditation and writing prayers. Then Bishop Zeiser presided at a Service of Holy Communion. The event ended with dinner, consisting of 300 empanadas with a side of rice and beans.

Think about bringing confirmation students from your congregation next year. Confirmation Day at the Synod provides a unique opportunity to celebrate our faith with many other young Lutherans!

## Our Iceberg is Melting



On Sunday, April 15, the Pocono Mission District Assembly met at Trinity Lutheran Church in Bangor. A significant portion of the meeting focused on developing a vision for the future of the church and practicing how we can impact the people around us and reach out to others.

Pastor Niels Nielsen, Associate of the Bishop, shared *Our Iceberg is Melting*, a book by John Kotter. This parable takes place on an iceberg inhabited by penguins. They are filled with a sense of urgency because their iceberg is melting. The penguins decide change is needed, and they set out to find a new iceberg.

The assembly experimented with working together to find "a new iceberg," that is, a new way to be the church in the future. Two common ideas were: being more kid-friendly and being more open to new people. The Assembly then broke into discussion groups to share stories of compassion from their own faith communities.

Many of the stories were very moving and personal. There were stories of times of tribulation, when people were transformed by an act of kindness or compassion. There were stories of tough financial times, divorce, and illness. People shared how they were changed by the kindness given to them from their church and individuals.

The experience demonstrated how even the smallest acts of kindness and compassion can make a big difference, and how we need to tell these stories of faith to people outside the church.