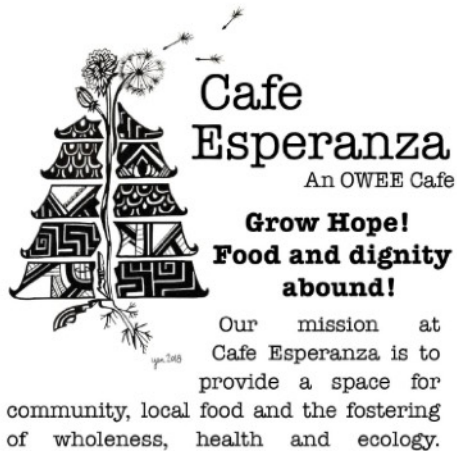


SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

Café Esperanza - Domestic Hunger Grant Recipient



Café Esperanza, a pay-what-you-can model community café, is scheduled to open in late Spring 2019. It is our vision that all people, regardless of financial means, deserve an opportunity to eat delicious, nutritious food. The café will serve breakfast and lunch, utilizing local, organic and seasonal foods as much as possible, highlighting the delicious products of local farmers.

Located in a densely populated neighborhood in the Northwest section of Reading, a city with a poverty rate of 43%, Café Esperanza will provide a place for people of all walks



of life to gather and get to know one another. Most of the labor will be provided by volunteers, including those who are offered a chance to exchange an hour of work for a meal, as well as others who simply enjoy serving their neighbors in this way. There will also be a job training aspect of our work. Young people will learn all aspects of food service, including the opportunity to receive barista training.

We are grateful for our recent grant from the ELCA Domestic Hunger program, as well as support from this Synod, the East Berks Mission District, the Reading Lutheran Parish, the Berks County Community Foundation, and many congregations and individual partners. For opportunities to contribute or volunteer, please follow us on Facebook (search for Café Esperanza).

The goal of the ELCA's World Hunger Appeal is to work toward "a just world where all are fed." Addressing this goal includes not only providing food for hungry people, but perhaps more importantly empowering people to provide a brighter future for themselves through community development, job training, and advocating for a more equitable distribution of the earth's resources.

In addition to supporting projects in more than 60 foreign countries, the World Hunger Appeal also administers a Domestic Hunger Grant program. Last year 77 grants were awarded to ministries and organizations in the United States that both address the root causes of hunger and provide relief services for those in need. Our synod received the two grants featured in this edition of *Synod News*.

Domestic Hunger Grant applications will be accepted again in 2019. Please check the program's web site - elca.org/domestichungergrants - to learn about the process and timeline for submitting an application. The web site can also give you more information about ELCA World Hunger's strategic priorities, at home and around the world.

Synod Assembly 2019



The 2019 Synod Assembly will be held on June 1 at Genetti Inn and Suites in Hazleton.

Online registration will open by the end of March - check your eNews and the website - but NOW'S the time to start GETTING READY!

The good news is: we've met the challenge of fitting all the necessary programming into one action-packed day. This means, you can save time and expense this year, saving up for next year (2020) when we will need three days to elect a new bishop.

More good news: REGISTRATION COST for voting members will be only \$100, while visitors this year will pay \$20 (which covers the cost of the full luncheon). Any and all are encouraged to attend.

To bring it all together in one day, we ask your help to make a couple things happen:

FIRST - we ask all congregations to select their two voting members by the end of March - for many of us, that means at our March Council Meetings.

SECOND - Those voting members should also plan to attend their MISSION DISTRICT ASSEMBLY, which usually happens in April or May. Important information will be shared and actions will take place at these local events, which will help set up and streamline work at the Assembly.

Stayed tuned for more details, as we discover in Christ... "What A Difference A Day Makes!"

Domestic Hunger Grant Recipient Easton Hunger Coalition



Easton, along with the neighboring cities of Bethlehem and Allentown, comprises the area known as the Lehigh Valley, which is the third most populous region in Pennsylvania. While recently Easton has enjoyed an economic rebirth, largely on high-end restaurants, artisan food shops, and a hugely successful farmers' market, too many households rely on emergency food from pantries and free meal centers. Over 50% of the area school children receive the federally funded free/reduced meal, and close to 1/3 of the Easton households self-identified in the most recent census as earning below the poverty level.

In 2014 a group of activists came together to form the Easton Hunger Coalition with the urging of a member of Arndt's Lutheran Church. The church has a long-standing relationship with food and community, although it is located outside of the Easton downtown. Persistent engagement around hunger relief guided the congregation to support multiple programs to help households reduce food insecurity.

The Coalition applied for an ELCA Domestic Hunger Grant to strengthen the organization; increase collaboration; and develop new tools to increase compassionate response to hunger, reduce stigmas associated with poverty, and to support self-advocacy programming and a significant public awareness program. Arndt's Lutheran Church as fiscal agent for the grant will support and guide this important work over the next three years. Their goal is "Hunger-Free in '23" for the Easton area, enabling a healthy community where all have access to nutritious food.



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