

PARTNERS IN
the spirit
AUGUST 2004



The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod

It's True, It's Real, It's Now!

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Blessed to be a Blessing: Discover Your Spiritual Gifts

Cinda Brucker: Sharing the Gospel story

The Power of Opportunity: Dana Heckman-Beil

Hola LifeKeys! Discovering Spiritual Gifts

LifeKeys - You've Got to Try This Yourself!



“The Gathering inspired me to get more people involved in the ELCA and in Christianity in general. The speakers, music, people, and the overall feel of the gathering made me want to share it with the world.” (Amanda)

Youth and adults from the synods in the ELCA Northeast Region gathered July 22-25 at Wagner College on Staten Island N.Y. for the 2004 ELCA Northeast Region Youth Gathering. The theme, *It's True, It's Real, It's Now*, comes from the first chapter of the Gospel of John, focusing on the Word of God revealed to us in Jesus Christ.

The four days were filled with Bible study, keynote speakers, workshops, servant events, reflection groups, sports, dances, conversation and just “kicking back.” Showers and downpours added excitement to getting around the Wagner campus. When the fog lifted, the Wagner College dining room offered diners a spectacular view of the Verrazano Narrows Bridge and the skyline of Manhattan.

“I had an awesome time at the event! Making new friends was the best part. I liked [the singing group] *A Bunch of Guys* a lot.” (Walt)

The Rev. Barbara Berry-Bailey, Associate Director of Worship in the ELCA Division for Congregational Ministries in Chicago, challenged youth each morning to respond to the immediate message of the *True, Real, Now* that is Jesus Christ in our lives. The gathering musicians, *Dakota Road*, led the participants in singing new and familiar songs.

“The daily Bible studies on John 1:1-8 done by the Rev. Barbara Berry-Bailey were one of the highlights for me. Music by Dakota Road was superb . . . and the Saturday night special *A Bunch of Guys – Knute and Piper* really got everyone in the swing of things with their sometimes silly and [sometimes] serious songs. It was nice to hear that two guys give all their proceeds to World Hunger.” (Bruce)

Workshops included topics such as *What Is a Lutheran? Be Safe-Be Aware*, *How to Start a Puppet Ministry*, *Clowning*, *Dealing with Conflict*, and *It's Tough Being A Christian*. Servant events involved participants in beach



cleanup, working at a food bank in Manhattan, exploring the ELCA's maritime ministries, and other activities.

"My favorite workshop was *Sharing Faith Stories*, because I was able to tell everyone my faith story and listen to everyone else's. I could relate with some of the things that were said." (Noelle)

Evening keynoters were Vance Robbins (Thursday night), a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma and a staff member of the ELCA's Youth Ministry and Gathering Team; Marc Keilberger (Friday night), founder of Leaders Today, a unique international organization that provides leadership training to over 100,000 young people every year; and Maren Hulden (Saturday night), president of the ELCA's Lutheran Youth Organization.

"The highlight for me was Saturday evening's total community. The music, the theme, the speakers all came together that evening to provide a very inspiring session." (Kathy)

An added treat Saturday night was *A Bunch of Guys – Knute and Piper* – two musicians from New England Synod who spoke about world hunger and their work to raise \$\$ for the ELCA World Hunger program by contributing all of the proceeds from the sale of their CD, *Take A Breath*. In addition to singing songs from that CD, Knute and Piper involved the audience in singing silly songs that got everyone up and moving. They were a big hit!

The Reverend Marie Jerge, Bishop of the Upstate New York Synod, preached at the closing worship Sunday morning. Her question to the worshippers was, "How will you measure your life?"

"I found the Regional Youth Gathering to be quite matchless, maximum, paramount, peerless, perfect, pre-eminent, predominant, prevailing, prime, principal, sovereign, superb, superlative, surpassing, terminal, top, top-drawer, towering, transcendent, ultimate, unequalled, unmatched, unparalleled, unsurpassable, unsurpassed, utmost. That's just the way it was." (Travis)

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Discover Your Spiritual Gifts

It's True, It's Real, It's Now!

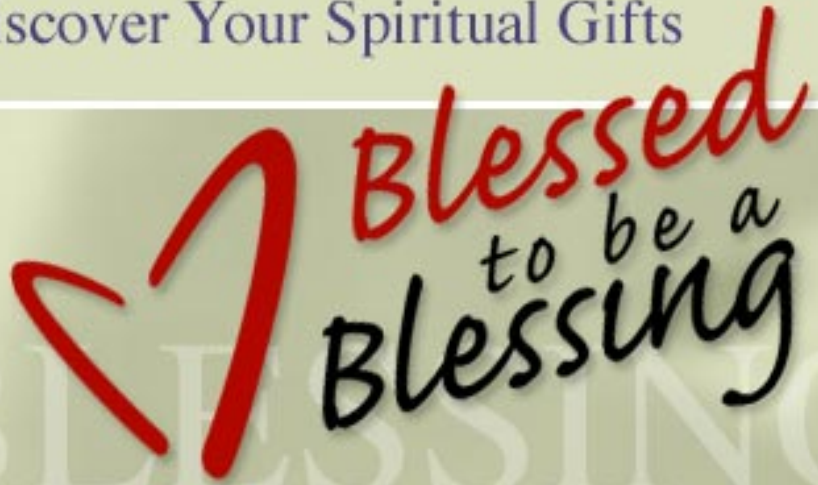
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So, what are you doing over lunch? You could be deepening your faith, discovering your gifts, passions, talents, and values, checking out the ways you are using your gifts, and recognizing what you could be missing.

The Badillos of Reading started a spiritual gifts group for a midweek, midday disciple-nurturing experience (see the article in this issue, *Hola LifeKeys: Discovering Spiritual Gifts*). You, too, might start or be part of a group such as this.

Learn more at the [Spiritual Gifts retreat](#) at Bear Creek Camp November 12-14, 2004.

“Congregations offering discernment programs report growth in faith and in service among their members who take the course,” reports West Berks Mission District Stewardship Team member Pastor Diane LaFauci. “Members awaken to new awareness of God’s love for them and God’s empowerment for ministry. Pastors who have taken this course have found it to be particularly helpful to them as well.”

“These discernment courses explore the spiritual gifts identified in scripture and include an inventory and other activities to help participants determine their spiritual gifts in several sessions that build upon each other. Participants gain increased understanding of their faith and calling as Christians and members of Christ’s Church.”

For more information on the retreat, or for information about taking or hosting a spiritual gifts workshop, call Pastor Diane LaFauci (Faith Lutheran Church, Mt. Penn) at 610-779-3343, or contact Pastor [Rebecca Knox](#) (Christ Lutheran Church, Grill) at 610-777-5792 or PastorKnox@verizon.net.

Look for the [online registration form](#) on the [calendar page](#) of the synod website.





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Cinda Brucker:
Sharing the Gospel story



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Cinda Brucker loves to tell the story. In fact, her desire to share the Gospel story with children and youth and to offer their families the fellowship and support of the church led her to discern a call to rostered ministry.

On August 8, at Faith Lutheran Church, Whitehall, Ms. Brucker will carry out that call when she is commissioned as an associate in ministry in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod.

A native of Vermilion, Ohio, where she was active in her home congregation of Trinity, she has been called to serve as director of youth and evangelism at St. John Lutheran Church, Sayre.

Cinda earned a Masters of Ministerial Studies degree at the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. She is a graduate of Thiel College, a Lutheran college in Greenville, Pa., where she earned her elementary teaching certification and a bachelor of arts degree in history.

Ms. Brucker most recently lived in Elizabethtown, Pa., where she has been a member of Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church. In that congregation, she has served on congregation council, the teaching staff, various committees, and in the choir. She has taught in public and private elementary schools and in the Elizabethtown Community Nursery School.

She has a daughter, Emily, who is a computer engineer in Chicago, and a son, Edward, a senior at Penn State, University Park, who is majoring in art education.

Cinda's hobbies include reading, needlework, and walking, as well as visiting museums, craft shows, and historical locations.

Welcome, Cinda!





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The Power of Opportunity:
Dana Heckman-Beil



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Opportunity is a funny thing. Doors can open at any time in life, leading us on unexpected journeys and linking spheres in our lives we always kept separate.

Dana Heckman-Beil knows firsthand the power of opportunity and the importance of following your dreams. From business student to ordained minister, Ms. Heckman-Beil has followed her heart and found herself living out her dreams.

Like many adult students, Dana was working full-time when she began taking classes at Lehigh Carbon Community College. Always an active member of her Lutheran congregation, Dana decided to return to school and earn her degree so she could become an associate in ministry. She earned an associate's degree at LCCC and started taking classes at Muhlenberg College soon thereafter.

Although Muhlenberg's Lutheran heritage was an attraction for Dana, she was sold on the college when she received a warm welcome from the staff. "Muhlenberg was a place that, as an adult student, you felt safe and that people cared about you academically, personally and professionally. Anybody in the office would sit down with you to go over your classes at any time. The location and flexible class times were great. I felt called to Muhlenberg."

Dana soon realized that God was calling her to service as an ordained minister. With a definite goal in her sights, and at least another four years of seminary ahead of her, Dana left her job as assistant to the vice president at Lutheran Services Northeast and started attending classes full-time. She pursued her studies with the same zeal she exhibits in the rest of her life. By December of 1999, she had completed the coursework needed for a business degree.

Throughout this time, she was meeting with candidacy staff of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod to discuss her desire to become a candidate for ordained ministry. She completed the process and was

approved as a candidate for ordained ministry. In 1998, she also met her future husband, David. They were married in the summer of 1999, while Dana was attending Muhlenberg full-time.

After graduating from Muhlenberg, Dana and David moved to Columbia, S. C., so Dana could attend the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary. Soon after arriving Dana learned she was pregnant. In January 2001, daughter Emily Sue was born and started her life as the “dorm baby” of the seminary. Emily attended classes with Dana that spring. “Every one of my classmates changed at least one diaper,” noted Dana.

Dana, who grew up in Lehighton, has been called to Good Shepherd Lutheran in Ashland, Pa. She will realize her dream to become an ordained minister on August 8 at the synodical Ordination Service to be held at Faith Lutheran Church, Whitehall, at 4:00 p.m.

(Excerpted from the newsletter of the Wescoe School of Muhlenberg College. Used by permission.)

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The prophet Elijah had a hard job proclaiming the One True God. Elijah realized he needed help. (Okay, so he really just wanted to get out of the prophet business). But God persevered and continued to call Elijah as a prophet, while enabling him to discover and identify his eventual replacement.

Raziel Badillo (St. Luke Lutheran Church, Reading) knows that in good business and in our faith journey it is imperative to find and train our eventual replacements. As a leader and prophet in the Latino community, he is looking for many people upon which the mantle of prophet, teacher, leader and minister can be placed.

When Raziel and his wife Lorena attended the West Berks Mission District assembly and then the Spiritual Gifts workshop at the 2004 synod assembly, he recognized the enabling hand of the Holy Spirit at once. How do we find leaders and ministers for the Latino ministry initiative? By going out and meeting the people in the community, then helping them discover their spiritual gifts and recognize their other life skills. Follow up the initial program by connecting these people and their discovered gifts to ministries and needs within the community and church. Put it all together in the correct cultural context and language, and we, the church, will be taking steps to fulfill the Great Commission to "go therefore and make disciples of all nations..."

Raziel brought his idea and need to the West Berks Mission District Stewardship Team, who had already begun leading and introducing spiritual gifts discernment programs to individuals and congregations in the mission district. "Are any of these programs in Spanish?" he asked the team. The answer was no.

Now, thanks to Raziel's work with a program called LifeKeys and the help of his wife Lorena and Pastor Rebecca Knox (Christ, Grill), the answer is '¡Si!'

The Badillos gathered a group of seven for a midweek, midday disciple-

nurturing experience. Our time together is as invigorating as a good siesta, without the sleep. Housewives bring their children and free baby-sitting is provided. Self-employed business people close their businesses for the three weekly sessions totaling eight hours.

The Bible readings, prayers, food, and conversation reflect the participants' multiple countries of origin. The group celebrates our diversity of gifts and upbringing, along with our unity in faith and as members of the Body of Christ. We are identifying our God-given gifts, where and how we use them at work, and where and how we use them for sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. We will look to see if we are not using our gifts, or if we are using them at work and not in the church. We've already begun to see that being different is how we reach out with the Gospel to all people.

"Remember that YOU are blessed to be a blessing," says Raziel. "God bless us! ¡Vaya con Dios!"

You can be part of this exciting program, too! See the article on the LifeKeys/Blessed to be a Blessing [retreat](#) in this issue of Partners.

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A Lutheran from West Berks Mission District tells about personal experience with the LifeKeys program:

Our Lenten journey 2004 was an awakening for me.

As usual, we met on Wednesday nights, beginning with a simple meal of soup and bread. That half hour was a gift in itself, a chance to slow down, to put aside the day's burdens, to laugh a lot, and even to get to know some people in the congregation better. (I can't believe I've known their names for years and never knew we shared a love of history and genealogy!)

I learned to treasure the 90 minutes that followed supper. The first session was spent identifying ways that I find joy—things that are fun to me. We met in small groups, and it was amazing to see how quickly we bonded. Noting the differences in how people work together also explained why our council and committees work (or don't work) the way they do. Detail people were working with big-picture people who didn't sweat the details (or care much about them.) But I still didn't see any gifts God had given me.

The following week we found all 20 spiritual gifts in the Bible and checked off lists of things that we like to do, which eventually helped us identify our own spiritual gifts. We even played a game of BINGO to find our gifts. I didn't want to play because I was sure I didn't have any spiritual gifts like the others did. At the end of the evening I was surprised to find that I had not one but two spiritual gifts. Maybe even three! I wondered if I was doing something wrong to find all those gifts and decided to ask the leader before the next session.

In Week 3, we were still gathering information. This session we worked with the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory. I had never heard of it before but others had used it at work for group building or in school for career counseling. It was a little confusing, but I figured out my own "type" in the end. I really wondered, though, how this was all going to come together.

Week 4 and 5 were my favorites. Each person in the group identified the things that they love and the values in life that were most important to them.



Hearing people talk about what they love (their passions) was like “Show and Tell.” People smiled, shared dreams, were proud of their passions.

Our leader pointed out that the joy we experienced in these sessions was our response to God. Our values and passions were simply things we experienced “with God” or *en theos*. That’s the Greek root of the word enthusiasm. We were enthusiastic about our values and passions because we were living out some of what God gave us.

I went home and cried after the fifth session because I was so overcome when I realized that I am created in God’s image (Gen 1:26-27), that God made me unique (Ps 139:13-16) and that God has in mind specific good works for me to accomplish (Eph 2:10).

In the last session, we put the puzzle together: all our God-given gifts, how we use them, which ones we don’t use, where we put our time and money compared to our values and passions. I affirmed that I’m using my gifts well at church and at work. I also found places in my life where I could pursue a dream I had put down years ago and hadn’t picked up since.

This experience has been great for me, but it’s been even more so for our congregation because participants came from the congregation council and Christian education and a variety of groups that don’t do much together.

I think the whole congregation should identify our collective gifts, passions, and values, and see how we’re using them for Christ in the world.

At the end of the study, we concluded with worship and offered our gifts back to God for use in the world. Now I understand what it means to say, “I am blessed to be a blessing.”

You’ve got to try this too!

NOTE: For more information about taking or hosting a spiritual gifts workshop, call Pastor Diane LaFauci (Faith Lutheran Church, Mt. Penn) at 610-779-3343, or contact Pastor Rebecca Knox (Christ Lutheran Church, Grill) at 610-777-5792 or PastorKnox@verizon.net. Or attend the event at Bear Creek Camp on November 12-14, 2004.