



Youth Servant Event in Argentina

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Youth Servant Event in Argentina: A
Chance to Put My Faith to Use

Edith Thrash: Giving More by Giving
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Sharing Resources

Michigan Disaster Response Team
Makes A Difference

Bob Kramer Ordained and Installed



From December 26, 2004, through January 2, 2005, 10 youth and two adults from the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod will travel to Argentina to participate in a youth servant event.

The event will be held at Good Samaritan Lutheran Church School in Buenos Aires, a congregation of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Argentina and Uruguay (*Iglesia Evangelica Luterana Unida*). The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA, is a companion synod with the IELU.

Among the criteria for youth were that they be in grade 10, 11, or 12 (2004-2005 school year), be an active member of a congregation of the synod, and assume the cost of the trip (approximately \$1,200).

Thirty-seven youth applied to participate in the event. "It was really a tough choice," says Kurt Garbe, associate of the bishop and staff liaison to the companion synod committees. "We had excellent applicants, a number of whom have not been involved in synod activities before. It was very exciting, but hard to choose just 10."

Three of those who will travel to Argentina were asked to tell about the reasons they applied to go. Two of the responses appear below. The third response appears in the next article, *A Chance to Put My Faith to Use*.

From Walt Hampton, Christ Lutheran Church, Dryville



The first thing that interested me was participating in another servant event. Having been on a mission trip to Arizona, I know that I enjoy helping other people, and feel that the best way to serve God is through service to other people.

Another reason I applied for this trip was to meet new people – both those from the synod and those in Argentina.

I was especially excited that it was in another country. I am very interested in experiencing a new environment and a culture different from my own.

After I applied, I had to be interviewed. I was a little nervous going into the interview, but when I was welcomed by the committee, I felt at ease. The interviewers asked me about my experiences, my skills, and how I would deal with a trip like this. When I got the letter that told me I was accepted, I was very excited and honored to be selected.

The next step was orientation. At this meeting we learned what was going to happen on the trip as well as some customs in Argentina. This meeting got us acquainted with the culture so we are not totally shocked when we arrive. Now the youth are meeting to get to know each other and develop a team.

I hope this servant event will give me an active way to grow and proceed with my faith journey. Along with serving God, I will be sharing the Word by extending my services to and loving my Christian neighbors in Argentina.

Todd Ebling, Allegheny Lutheran Church, Knauers

Since I was young, I have always felt that God was calling me into the ministry. I was never sure to what kind of ministry work, but I know that the only thing to which I can devote the rest of my life's work is God.

I applied to the synod's youth servant event in Argentina because I feel an extreme sense of responsibility toward social justice in the world. I feel the need to give to others according to how God has given to me. Christ himself showed his love through acts of servanthood. So, if our holy God can be a servant to us, as sinners, I am immensely convicted and compelled to be a servant for others.

I never feel like my work on earth for others is done or even considerably surface-scratched. I hope to understand a totally new culture and gain priceless experiences through this trip, and ultimately I hope to grow much closer to God

and strengthen my faith.





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By Hillary Bender, New Jerusalem Lutheran Church, Hellertown

Summer weather in the winter months? New Year's Eve in shorts and flip-flops? Bar-B-Q in the winter? All this and nine other kids, two adults and an all-night flight to a new country? What more could one ask? Oh, yeah, and we get to paint! After about two seconds of indecision, my application was filled out and on its way. I had applied to be a part of the synod mission trip to Argentina.

There are many reasons I want to go on this service event. I like new experiences, I enjoy helping people, I want to bring back new ideas and stories to my congregation and youth, and I also want to set my own path and get away from my normal life to experience and explore things most people do not have the opportunity to do.

Here is a chance to put my faith to use in an environment that will open my eyes to a new perspective. My first mission trip to Philadelphia served to strengthen my desire to help others and my own confidence in my abilities. Here is a chance to build on those insights.

The experiences that I have and the events that are going to take place will involve me personally, not just some actor on TV that is removed from my small-town life and the perspective I have developed and that I share with my friends. I can bring back these events through pictures and videos and make what I have experienced real to them.



I hope to give other youth the encouragement they need to start getting more involved in either their churches or in their own synod. I believe that if kids can find a way to help, they will jump at the opportunity because they realize that if one of their peers has stepped out of their safe zone, they can, too.

All this and more I had hoped to relay to the selection committee. I waited with great anticipation for the ringing of the phone and the delivery of the mail in the days that followed my interview. I reacted with relief and excitement when Pastor Garbe called to inform me of my selection for the trip! I was one of 10 out of 37 youth interviewed who was chosen! I was on my way to Argentina.

The process of getting ready to go to Argentina has been a long one, but I know it will be well worth my while. The interviews were wonderful; I loved interacting with all the people that were there to decide who would go. After I was selected to attend the trip, we set a date to meet all the other youth who were traveling with me on the trip. That was also quite enjoyable. We got to know the other people and where they were from, and shared some other information about ourselves. As of my writing this, we are awaiting another set date to discuss the particulars of the trip and get to know each other better.

My passport is ready, my hopes are high and with the support of my family, friends and congregation I will begin my journey.



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Edith Thrash has lived out her faith by providing ministry to those in need and supporting organizations that help people.

On October 17, Edith was recognized for that ministry when she received the Wilson Touhsaent Love in Action award at the first annual Celebrate Social Ministry event at the Holiday Inn Conference Center in Allentown.

An active member of Zion Lutheran Church, Weatherly, Edith is a board member of the Carbon County Volunteers for Literacy, organizing tutoring sessions for those who need assistance in acquiring everyday life literacy skills.

She is also a member of the Panther Valley High School Learning Team. She is at school at 6:00 a.m. to plan, with teachers, strategies for children who need attention in a variety of subjects. Edith was living out "No Child Left Behind" before it became popular.

By being involved in so many organizations, Edith has shown the depth of her commitment to showing God's love to others through her acts of love. She is on the Board of Carbon County Shepherd House. She is personally involved in teaching food purchase and preparation skills to young families at the Carbon County Super Cupboard Program and the Carbon County Emergency Food and Shelter program. These programs that receive her personal touch literally change the lives of parents and children who otherwise would be left alone to wander through a maze of programs.



In her spare time, Edith is on the Carbon County Advisory Committee, Hazelton/Lehighon Mission District, Hospice St. John, Women of the ELCA, Pennsylvania Association of Volunteers, Hazelton Business and Professional Women's Association, Campaign Specialist for United Way, Carbon County Partner's in Progress and numerous other groups.

Edith Thrash has been able to live a life that reflects that life of concern that our Lord Jesus has taught us to live. If you ask Edith why she does all these things, her reply is "Because I need to give back." Whether it is teaching a child to read, or a young mother to cook or in the daily tasks she performs at her job as program coordinator for Diakon's Volunteer Home Care, Edith is always busy giving more by giving back.

Edith was one of 11 individuals and congregations receiving awards at the Celebrate Social Ministry event. Former bishop Harold Weiss was the keynoter for the event attended by 180 people from congregations across the synod.

The program celebrated not only the award recipients but also all those who labor in love to turn Sunday's worship into Monday service.

Other award recipients were Mitchell Possinger (Union, Schnecksville; Diakon Award), Nelvin Vos (St. John, Allentown; Good Shepherd Award); Owen and Jean Bastian (St. Paul, Trexlertown; Lutheran Congregational Services Award); Ryan Kavalsky (Muhlenberg College Award); and Ann Bodnyk (West Berks Mission District Summer Program; Witness and Service Ministry Team Award).

Congregational award winners were Elvin Keiser (Huff's Union Church; the Rev. Jane Kropa, pastor); Joan and Carl Hein (Heidelberg-Slatedale Pastoral Charge; the Rev. David Hess, pastor); K. Edward Rohrbach (Good Shepherd, Wilson Borough; the Rev. Bruce MacLaughlin, pastor); the Food Bank at St. Paul, Easton; the Rev. David Newman, pastor; and the Emergency Support and Assistance Program at Trinity, Towanda; the Rev. Jira Albers, pastor.



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In early November, Gloria Mengle from Hope Lutheran Church, Reading, contacted the synod office to say that the congregation had, among other worship books, one hundred copies of the *Service Book and Hymnal* to give away.

Since most synod congregations have moved to the *Lutheran Book of Worship* or other newer worship materials, it seemed doubtful that there would be any takers for the hymnals.

Not so. Within a few days of posting the note, Sr. Verna Meckes (*pictured above*) wrote to say that she had contacted Hope church “and, if we can work out details on picking them up, B'nai B'rith will have new hymnals for their Christian services.”

Sr. Verna is a resident of the B'nai B'rith Apartments in Allentown. She wrote that “the hymnals we now use are United Methodist, and are well worn. It is hard to find hymns to fit our liturgical calendar, so we are most grateful for your sharing the news.”

They did work out details, and on Tuesday, November 16, the hymnals were at their new home in Allentown.

Facilitating the sharing of resources among congregations and communities is one of the goals of the synod **Connection Building Ministry Team**. To that end, the team is in the process of setting up a resource sharing database on the synod's Web site (<http://www.godslove.org>). In the



meanwhile, the team is encouraging congregations and leaders to use **E-News** as a way to begin that process.

If you have materials or items that you are willing to lend or give away, email Carol Weiser at cweiser@fast.net with the details. Be sure to include a phone number and/or email address so that folks can contact you directly.





Michigan Disaster

Response Team Makes A Difference

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“If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; If one member is honored, all rejoice together with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26).

When Hurricanes Charley, Ivan, Jeanne, and Francis moved across Florida and the southern states this fall, they left a path of destroyed property and lives.

A Lutheran Disaster Response Team from the NW Lower Michigan Synod, lead by Pastor David Sprang, spent a week in hurricane-ravaged Port Charlotte, Florida, in mid-October trying to help. They came to show that where the church suffers, the church responds.

Seven folks from Michigan drove 26 hours from all around Michigan to Port Charlotte. Arrangements were made through **Lutheran Disaster Response** working with **Lutheran Services of Florida**. The team brought tools to respond to various needs, but chainsaws proved to be the most helpful ones. They stayed at Peace Lutheran Church in Port Charlotte.

Peace Church had major damage to its sanctuary in Hurricane Charley, and roof damage to the entire church complex. But the members rallied to move furniture and schedules and to readjust so that the work of the church could go on. Michigan group members slept on the floor in the church nursery and made their own breakfast and lunch. Members of Peace made supper each night.



After worshiping with the congregation at the 8:00 a.m. service on Sunday morning, the team began work by responding to requests for help from members of Peace. They helped a church member rescue a few last items from a demolished mobile home, then spent the afternoon cleaning black mold from the home of a shut-in.

On Monday the group worked with Pilgrim United Church of Christ in Port Charlotte. A back lot littered with damaged pine trees was cleared to make way for trailers that would be set up to house future disaster-response teams. Then the group responded to calls for help from members of Pilgrim.

The team worked two days in Arcadia, a city severely damaged as Hurricane Charley followed the Peace River inland. Trinity United Methodist Church acted as the clearinghouse for ecumenical disaster response teams. Priority was given to the elderly and disabled.

The work was hard, but it was good. The group began each day with devotions, reflecting on how God helps us pick up the pieces when disaster strikes. Each evening seven dirty and sweaty workers would rejoice in a hot shower and clean clothes. It was good to put faith into action. Each member of the group vows to be available whenever disaster strikes and whenever the church calls for help.

Submitted by the Rev. David Sprang, pastor, Christ The King Lutheran Church, Gladwin, Michigan, and member of the NW Lower Michigan Synod Response Team



Bob Kramer Ordained and Installed



Left to right: Pastors Mary Gade, Jack Ivey, William Martin, Bob Kramer; Bishop David Strobel; Pastor Cheryl Meinschein

Robert "Bob" Kramer was ordained and installed as assistant pastor of the Lutheran congregation of Ziegels Union Church, Breinigsville, on November 7.

For Bob, this is a most improbable call to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. Just five years ago, Bob thought retirement was around the corner. However, God continued to tug at his heart to use the gifts given to him to the fullest. On November 7, Bob fully answered that call and was ordained.

Bob began his formal preparation for the ordained ministry at Lancaster Theological Seminary and graduated this past May from the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Included in his training were clinical pastoral education at the Lancaster General Hospital, mission work at St. Vincent's Mission, David, Kentucky, contextual education at Trinity Lutheran Church, Reading, and an internship at Ziegels.

He and his wife, Carolyn, live in Denver, Pa. They are the parents of two grown children, Jennifer and Andrew; they have three grandchildren. Bob's previous vocations include four years of teaching agriculture at the high school level and 25 years as an operations manager for a Berks County bird feed manufacturer.

Bishop David R. Strobel presided and preached at the

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ordination/installation service. The Rev. Mary W. Gade, senior pastor of the Lutheran congregation of Ziegels, the Rev. Jack C. Ivey, pastor of the United Church of Christ congregation of Ziegels, and the Rev. Cheryl Meinschein, associate of the bishop of Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, assisted.

The Rev. William A. Martin, retired pastor of the Muddy Creek Evangelical Lutheran Church (Lower Susquehanna Synod), was the sponsoring pastor. The combined choirs of Ziegels Lutheran, Ziegels UCC and Muddy Creek Lutheran, accompanied by the Ziegels bell choir, offered the anthem, "Here I Am, Lord."

While the call to the ministry of Word and Sacrament seemed improbable to Bob, he still answered, "Here I am, Lord." And he looks forward to the surprises the future may hold in his ministry of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.