

## **Report of the ELCA NWPAs Synod Green Team for the 2022 Annual Synod Assembly**

The Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod authorized the formation of the volunteer NWPAs Synod Green Team to focus efforts on what it means to be good stewards of God's Creation. The Green Team is grateful for the continuing synod budget support. The Green Team's purpose is to "raise awareness of and advocate for the care of creation". Their mission is to support and encourage creation care ministries, raise awareness, and model creation care advocacy consistent with ELCA teachings in our faith communities and public life. They are led by the LAMPAs and ELCA priorities which support this ministry effort in PA and nationally. The Green Team currently has a core group of ten people who meet monthly via Zoom (including two from Lutherlyn) to plan coming work. Another ten receive the monthly agendas and minutes.

The Green Team has worked in many ways to respond to the mission statement. Over the years the committee members have reached out to congregations, Synod organizations, individuals and civic organizations by way of presentations and collaboration in some of the following ways:

- Continued to build a synod-wide email contact list with representation from each congregation.
- Continued to make connections with other faith-based groups who are focused on the care of creation. National and international groups as well as groups within our synod. Lutherans Restoring Creation, LAMPAs, Blessed Tomorrow, EcoAmerica, Green Faith, Penn Future, Creation Justice Ministries, SWPA Synod, Social Justice Coordinator for Sisters of St. Joseph in Erie, Catholic Rural Ministry in Oil City, Our Lady of Mercy Parish in Harborcreek/Erie County, and the Benedictine Sisters in Erie County are a few.
- Shared links to ELCA/Blessed Tomorrow's live webinars, forums and blogs in their "Let's Talk Climate" series.
- Gathered a list of educational resources to use with children concerning the Care for creation including Sunday School and Bible School lessons as well as bulletin and newsletter pages. This work was mostly accomplished by Lutherlyn staff.
- Planned and hosted a "God's Work, Our Hands" Sunday clean up at Presque Isle in Erie, with support from a Thrivent Action Team grant. Shared information about other available events at Shade's Beach in Erie County and St. Peter's Lutheran in North East.
- Collaborated with LAMPAs and the ELCA to find sites for the ELCA Creation Stewardship Project pilot survey across Pennsylvania. Team members met with an ELCA representative, Ruth Ivory-Moore, and a LAMPAs representative, Tracey DePasquale. During one of our monthly Zoom meetings, we were visited by Ruth Ivory-Moore and Adele Bodog of ELCA churchwide staff and SWPA Synod representatives. The goal of the survey is 50% reduction in carbon footprint by 2030 and 100% by 2050. They describe the pilot survey as a series of environmental assessments that would include some form of energy audit. They are relying on EPA Energy Star to guide the energy audits. Part of the

funding is coming from World Hunger and Lutheran Disaster Relief. The assessment will include energy use, recycling practices, vehicle use, water consumption, and property habitat. By the end of 2021, several NWPA synod congregations and Lutherlyn were expected to participate.

- Led “Care for Creation” groups and advocated for the use of eco-friendly kitchen, cleaning and office products in their home congregations.
- Kept the Green Team Link on the Synod website up-to-date with the help of Ellen Shulin-Rutherford.
- Shared numerous articles on the Synod Facebook page, with Ellen’s help and provided new **“Green Corner”** half-page bulletin inserts and full-page newsletter/bulletin board information sheets, including a *“Caring for Creation - Your Electric Power: Your Choice”* trifold brochure.
- Submitted Green Team articles to the WELCA newsletter.
- Updated the list of creation friendly supplies for congregations.
- Discussed the Earth Charter from Lutherans Restoring Creation and how congregations and the Synod might sign the Charter.
- Worked in conjunction with Lutherans Restoring Creation, LAMPa and Penn Future to advocate with legislators for creation care agenda items.
- Several congregations within the synod contributed soil, photos and prayers and then had Rogation events using the soil sent back from the LAMPa/United Seminary Rogation Event.
- Continued contact with as many county recycling coordinators as possible across the Synod’s 15 counties. Lynn Armel, Erie County Recycling Coordinator met with the team via Zoom to discuss the International Recycling Group’s proposed plastic recycling facility. Reviewed Westmorland County’s Styrofoam recycling equipment. Shared information about Erie County glass recycling centers. Efforts by one member supported the creation of a new Venango County recycling center.
- Contacted institutions such as Luther Square in Erie, Bethesda, Thiel, and the Erie County Convention Center about their recycling practices and to encourage them to Reduce, Recycle, Reuse.
- Kathie Westerman, a member of the SWPA Synod Church and Society Committee joined the January 2021 Zoom meeting to share what’s happening in SWPA.
- Encouraged congregations to recognize Earth Sunday in their worship services. Shared ideas and information from various sources.
- Several team members are ELCA Creation Care Ambassadors and are available to make presentations to congregations and community gatherings. We encourage others to participate!

Thank you for your interest in and support for the NWPA Synod Green Team. Please share this information with your congregation. ***For further information and participation, please contact Dennis Groce at 814-384-3025 or [nwpasynodgreenteam@gmail.com](mailto:nwpasynodgreenteam@gmail.com).***