



LAMPa Report to Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod

In response to God's love in Jesus Christ, we advocate for wise and just public policies in Pennsylvania that promote the common good.

Lutheran Advocacy Ministry in Pennsylvania is a shared ministry of seven Pennsylvania synods, the ELCA Domestic Mission unit, and Pennsylvania ELCA agencies and institutions. Through LAMPa, Lutherans who are working to eradicate hunger are supported to voice their faith convictions in the public square with and on behalf of our most vulnerable neighbors and the world we share, while seeking to create a more just Commonwealth.

In 2018, LAMPa celebrated 39 years of advocacy ministry that supported and deepened your congregational efforts to address hunger, poverty, human trafficking, immigration, school funding inequity, racism and environmental threats to health and safety. Thanks be to God for the support of our Northwestern Pennsylvania Synod Policy Council representatives, Gayle Truitt-Bean and the Rev. Deborah Jacobson, whose term expired in 2018.

Our work in 2018 was guided by both the LAMPa issue agenda adopted by our policy council in December 2017 as well as the principles of ELCA World Hunger to be transformative, holistic and integrated with attention to fostering vital congregations and equipping leaders.

Equipping disciples, growing leaders, supporting vital congregations

We began 2018 by accompanying and supporting Pennsylvania hunger leaders in learning and legislative visits during the ELCA World Hunger Gathering in Washington, D.C. In May, Lutheran Day in the Capitol saw us celebrate what God is doing through advocates in each synod as well as to equip advocates for justice-seeking on issues from hunger to clean water and to put that into practice in legislative visits in the state Capitol. As keynote, Nobel-Prize-winning geophysicist Dr. Richard Alley inspired, informed and encouraged advocates to address climate change. LAMPa staff took that message to the National Youth Gathering, connecting with youth to share ways they could care for our common home when they returned to Pennsylvania.

LAMPa staff helped organize and engage Lutherans in a statewide EnergyStar tour to help congregations understand government resources and research available to reduce their contributions to climate change as well as save money. We also joined other faith-based organizations to host a webinar on community solar programs, laying the groundwork for related legislation introduced in early 2019. LAMPa staff worked with individuals and congregations who were led by their ministry of service into advocacy and by sharing grant opportunities with those engaged in related ministry. LAMPa also invited and supported advocates and those with lived experiences of hunger, poverty, and violence in testifying, making legislative visits, speaking at press conferences, or leading letter-writing campaigns

Progress on LAMPa's Issue Agenda

The 2018 session saw success on several items on LAMPa's issue agenda.

Hunger – Maintained funding for the State Food Purchase Program and the Pa. Agriculture Surplus System, the state’s major anti-hunger programs.

Clean Slate – The legislature passed and the governor signed clean slate legislation that seals the records of those with nonviolent misdemeanor convictions after an individual has remained crime-free for 10 years and would also seal non-conviction records as a matter of course. This is now being held up as a model for criminal justice reform in other states.

Firearms and Domestic Violence – The legislature passed and the governor signed legislation that would require those involved in domestic violence to turn over firearms to police within 24 hours. The previous legislation allowed firearms to be turned over to friends and family members within 60 days.

Safe Harbor – The legislature passed and the governor signed legislation that would divert child sex-trafficking victims away from the criminal justice system and into appropriate services.

Protecting the Social Safety Net – LAMPa advocates helped defeat legislation that would have created barriers to food aid by mandating burdensome work requirements, even in areas with high unemployment.

Payday lending – Payday lending legislation was introduced, but quick and firm response by advocates kept it from getting anywhere.

Creation Care – An outpouring from advocates helped defeat a last-minute attempt to pass legislation shared at Lutheran Day that would have rolled back environmental regulation of the oil and gas industry to standards of 30 years ago.

The passion of our advocates is recognized. We are the only organization in Pennsylvania that garners signatures for hunger funding and policy in every legislative district in the state. We have been invited to participate in the Governor’s Food Policy Council. Our work on Safe Harbor has led to an invitation to work on further legislation to end human trafficking.

We look forward to strengthening ecumenical and interfaith work in 2019, building on the foundation that has been laid in recent years and in response to the glaring need to heal division and promote unity in such a time as this when our differences have been fed by fear and turned into paralysis at one extreme and violence at the other. We lean into that work with the theme of “Set a Welcome Table,” and a day of ecumenical and interfaith fellowship, service, learning and preparation for advocacy in May.

Connecting Service to Advocacy: In 2018, LAMPa resourced congregations participating in the Churchwide Day of Service, garnering more than 1,000 letters to lawmakers on a variety of topics. LAMPa will again share service-and-advocacy projects for Sept. 8. We would be glad to help your congregation plan to make that day one of “God’s work. Our hands. Our voices.”

With deep gratitude for all the ways in which you support LAMPa’s ministry,

Tracey DePasquale

LAMPa Director