

WE ARE CHURCH TOGETHER

2024



NOVEMBER 2024 Mission Support Memo

STORYTELLING ENGAGEMENT

Mission Support connects us!

A story from the West Virginia-Western Maryland Synod

As you read this story, what inspires you?

Who is working behind the scenes in your ministry that you can thank and support?

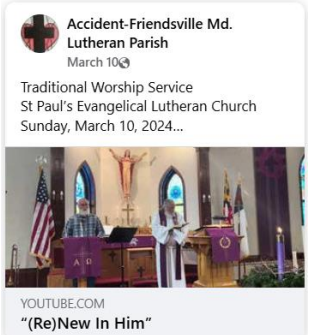
Mission Support shared with the churchwide organization allows us to create partnerships with preferred vendors that make things like online giving and having a web presence easier and more affordable for congregations. These partnerships allow the churchwide organization to use some of your dollars to offer digital ministry grants to congregations. This year, 20 grants were awarded, boosting access to ministry in each context and across our church. We have been collecting stories from the grant recipients and want to share one of them, from [Accident-Friendsville Md. Lutheran Parish](#), a three-point parish comprising two congregations in Accident (Accident St. John's in the Cove and St. Paul Lutheran Church), and one in neighboring Friendsville (Grace Lutheran Church).

Nestled in the rolling hills of western Maryland, in the popular summer-tourist area Deep Creek, this parish has come together to preserve their Lutheran roots. With some members having moved away, some around only in the summer, some older and shut in, and some discouraged by the tough winter weather in this Appalachian region, these congregations still wanted to stay in touch and engaged.

That's where technology came in. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Fred Fox, the organist for Accident-Friendsville, started recording the Sunday sermon on his cellphone and posting it on the church's Facebook page. The sermons caught on, and now Accident-Friendsville streams its entire service and special gatherings too. Attending a synod conference, the Rev. Peter Suwak, pastor of Accident-Friendsville, heard about a new ELCA grant for digital ministry and worked with Sherri Schafer, the synod's director for evangelical mission, to apply for one. His goal, he says, is to get the word of God out to people, whether that means connecting with worshipers in the sanctuary or in Bible study, praying together or widening the church's video outreach.

The digital ministry grant allowed Accident-Friendsville to purchase two iPads, a stand and connecting cords. In the beginning, the Facebook views came from all over the world, but the church wanted to focus on local people, so it now posts in more select regions and not always so broadly. The members are excited that a young adult is eager to help them connect with folks who have watched on Facebook, and they plan to reach out to make more personal contacts. They have even received monetary gifts from those engaging online, including a couple in Morgantown, Md., and one woman sending a check for continued video work and special services. Not only is Accident-Friendsville sharing, it is receiving! Its ministry is growing as it trains another tech person so that Fox can focus on music and the parish rather than video work. This rural parish is eager to learn new practices and grateful for the resources made possible through Mission Support.

Featured



ENGAGE WITH US

Webinar: “Theology and Practicality of Space Usage”

How can we better use our space to be a blessing for our community, our neighborhood and our world? How is God calling us to expand our footprint beyond our normal activities to invite and encourage other engagement? This webinar will explore both the theology and the practicality of utilizing space differently. Through best practices and innovative examples, you'll see some of the ways space is being used for mission as well as hear an invitation to follow that lead.

Mark your calendar:

“Theology and Practicality of Space Usage”

Monday, Nov. 18

6-7 p.m. Central time

[Join the webinar here.](#)

Meeting ID: 846 6781 8504

Passcode: 057442

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GRATEFUL

This month, we share our gratitude for the saints who have gone before us to plant, support and grow over 8,500 ELCA congregations across the U.S. These leaders include our many pastors, deacons, youth ministers and council leaders, but also leaders behind the scenes. They have all inspired us, taught us and even pushed us to live out Christ's command to serve others. We are grateful for those who came before us and those serving now, whether at the altar, in the choir, in the narthex as an usher or behind the scenes; keeping the kitchen, doing yard work or running the technology. We are a church sharing the difference God's grace and love in Christ makes for all people — we are church together.

In deep gratitude,

Victoria Flood, Senior Director for Congregation and Synod Support

Nick Kiger, Director for Mission Support

Karen Kretschmann, Coordinator for Storytelling Engagement



Find more stories at: www.livinglutheran.org/sofia/mission-support-memos-2024.php