

CONGREGATIONAL MAGAZINE

MAY & JUNE 2026
ISSUE NO. 01

Life at the U

FEATURED COMMUNITY EVENT:
MEN'S NIGHT OUT

MISSION STATEMENT

We at Union Lutheran Church believe that we are called to share Jesus' love with our ever-changing, diverse community, as we grow together in Christ. We welcome everyone seeking God's love and grace to participate fully no matter what you look like, where you're from, whom you love, how much money you have, or whatever other labels we use to divide ourselves.

We welcome all gender identities, gender expressions, sexual orientations, ages, races, abilities, and socio-economic statuses, and we are committed to the work of racial equity. Celebrating God's radical welcome, and through our unity in Jesus Christ, we strive to be a community where everyone is seen, valued, and embraced.

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IN THE BEGINNING

STARTING THE UNION LUTHERAN PERIODICAL

Here we go! Union is pleased to introduce the new Union Lutheran periodical—a congregational magazine chalk-full of community highlights, upcoming events, interesting synod and ELCA articles, and more. New Issues can be expected every few months with each issue drawing focus to new and notable things happening at Union.

For our fist issue, we're presented with a delemma: With every great periodical comes a great name, but a community-focused periodical deserves community input. That's where you come in! We want your ideas: Witty, silly, any and all, such and so forth. If you think it would look good on the front cover of the magazine then we want to know it.

Now, I know what you're thinking: "Great! But how do I submit my ideas?" An excellent question. For your convenience, please scan the QR code above; from here, you'll be directed to a Breeze form where you may input up to three submissions. Inversely, if you're partial to our current name—*Life at the U*—feel free to push for that name as well. After submitting the form, we will review all submissions and select the one that best represents the energy and message of the periodical.

Let's talk parameters. Submissions should be anywhere between one and six words; they should be family friendly and should reflect our beliefs as a church community—this means no derogatory language and, of course, no hate speech. As a general rule, if you wouldn't show it to your mom, your grandma, or your pastor, we probably can't use it, either. Beyond that, have fun! *Life at the U*, or whatever name it takes on, is by the people, for the people; we want a name that makes you excited to see what your fellow Union friends are getting up to, and one that makes you proud to be part of our Union Lutheran community.

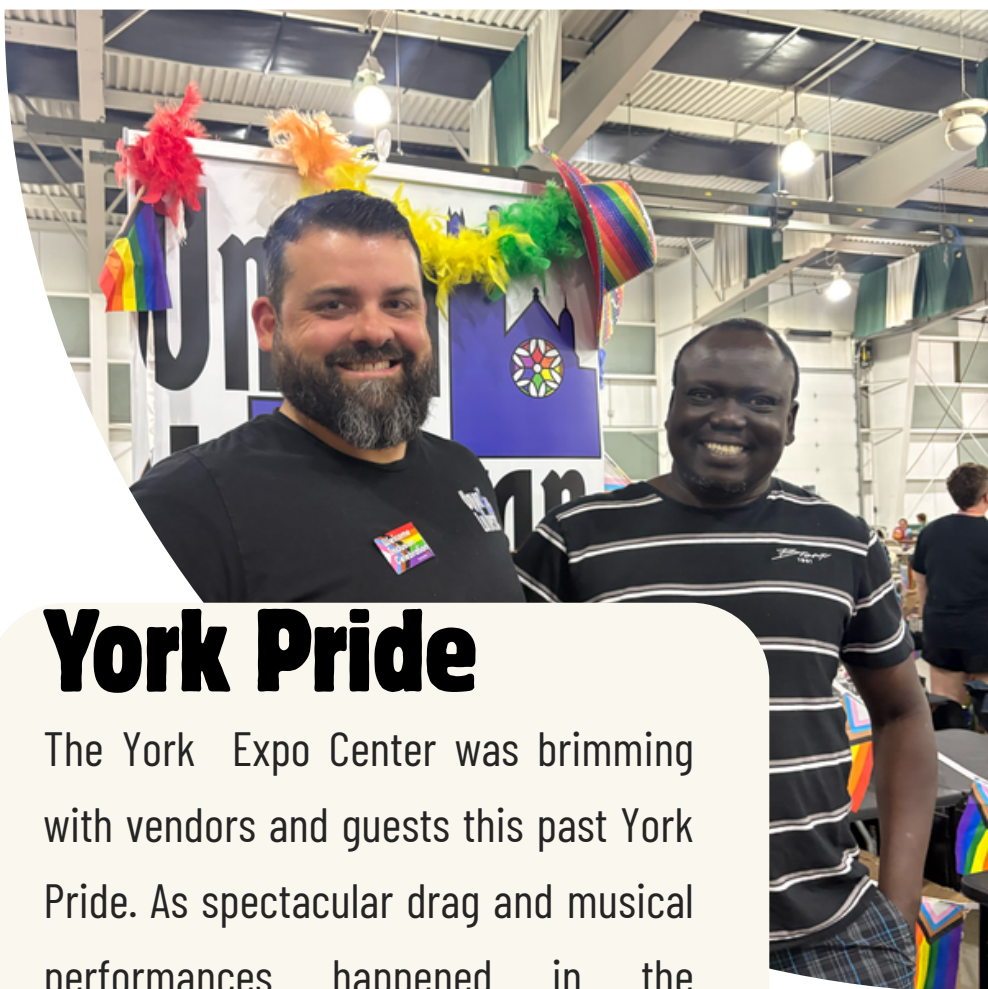


JUNE

KEEPING UP WITH UNION

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICTOR SALVO



York Pride

The York Expo Center was brimming with vendors and guests this past York Pride. As spectacular drag and musical performances happened in the background, the Union Lutheran table shared prizes, handmade bracelets, and faith with all who stopped by our table. Greeting old friends and making introductions with new ones, our message of Christ's love for all filled the space.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICTOR SALVO

Pride in the Park

Despite an unexpected start, Pride in the Park at the York Revs stadium saw dozens of vendors and hundreds of community participants. Our Union volunteers shared our many “Pick a Duck” prizes with the York County community, participated in the Pride Parade around the Revs stadium, and Pastor Joel even stepped up to the bat to demonstrate some stellar batting skills. In the end, Pride in the Park was a homerun.



Juneteenth

Our in-door, out-door Juneteenth celebration in collaboration with the York County Cultural Alliance saw amazing food, crafts and games for all ages, community aid tables, resources, and music going all night. Union Lutheran is always proud to host and help celebrate Black Independence Day by offering our space to those in our community, and fostering a sense of community and inclusivity right here in York County.



PHOTOGRAPHY BY
VICTOR SALVO

COMMUNITY EVENT HIGHLIGHT

MEN'S NIGHT OUT

ARTICLE WRITTEN
BY VICTOR SALVO



PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICTOR SALVO

A clear, comfortable Tuesday night in downtown York City sees a group of men taking seats at a table towards the back of Men in the Kitchen, a Cajun-Latin American fusion spot right on West Market St. Comfortable chatter fills the air as the group, mostly Union members with a few new faces, discuss the order of the night. After some deliberation, a round of wings makes its way to the table, kicking off the evening of fun, food, and fellowship.

Men's Night Out isn't new to Union Lutheran, but its rejuvenation under Pastor Del certainly is. The group gets together on the fourth Tuesday of each month at a restaurant of their choosing, including previous favourites like Viet Thai Cafe, Plaza Azteca Mexican Restaurant, and Levant Mediterranean Cuisine. Following the prayer and main meal, Pastor Del leads Bible study and discussion ranging from scripture to daily life walking with God.

Despite his absence that night, his handouts were still passed around the table and an insightful discussion about Psalm 117 made way. Questions were posed about the meaning of the Psalm—what it means to praise the Lord during Sunday morning worship, and how to share love and faithfulness with our neighbors. From across the table, I hear an analogy brewing about a member's bird feeder; "At my bird feeder," he says, "all the birds and animals eat together from the same feed indiscriminately." The message is clear: If the world is God's bird feeder laid out for us, then we must take from it communally as the birds and the animals.

AT MY BIRD FEEDER....ALL THE BIRDS AND ANIMALS EAT TOGETHER FROM THE SAME FEED INDISCRIMINATELY

After an evening of casual camaraderie, I asked the group a few questions about the importance of Men's Night Out, particularly in a day and age where masculinity is readily associated with toxicity and isolation. I was surprised by the unanimity of their response; they shared that Men's Night Out is less about being men and more about their common interests. "Anyone can come to Men's Night," one said. "It's just another way to get together." Then, when asked what keeps them coming back, they spoke about the friendship and fellowship that comes from sitting around a table eating good food with likeminded people. At this, a friend of mine tossed out the term *gastrodiplomacy*, a long word



PHOTOGRAPHY BY VICTOR SALVO

that expresses a simple idea: The easiest way to win hearts and minds is through the stomach. As the night came to a close and final preparations were made for the next restaurant, I couldn't agree more.

Before final goodbyes were exchanged, I asked one more question: How does Men's Night Out help them feel closer to God? Here, a plethora of answers arose. Some said praying together while others mentioned the importance of their different backgrounds, once again invoking the image of the bird feeder. Curiously, multiculturalism was mentioned again, and how engaging with the foods and atmospheres of unfamiliar or different cultures made them feel closer to God. As the group meets this June 23rd at the York Buffet for a special Father's Day celebration, I anticipate the excitement to celebrate all types of fathers, yet again welcoming all to God's earthly bird feeder.

KEEPING UP WITH THE ELCA

THE LATEST HEADLINES
AND ARTICLES



All Together in One Place – Bishop Yehiel Curry

Every day, I receive emails and messages from members across this church. Many of you share concerns about the state of the world and how faith informs your response to troubling or perplexing events. Sometimes you ask me to speak out more often regarding current affairs, and sometimes you ask me not to speak so much. I cannot answer every message, yet I am learning from you and feel the heartbeat of this church through the concerns, fears and hopes you share with me.



ELCA Awarded Grant for Total Inclusion!



Chicago — The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has received a generous grant for ongoing support of Total Inclusion!: Widening the Welcome at ELCA Outdoor Ministries. The program, a collaboration of the ELCA churchwide organization and the Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Network (LOM), equips and empowers outdoor ministry organizations as they move toward more intentional welcome of all youth, including those who historically have been marginalized in the church — especially youth of color, youth with disabilities and youth who identify as LGBTQIA+.

Lutheran Disaster Response

June 2026 offered a sobering reminder that humanitarian emergencies rarely occur in isolation. Around the world, armed conflict, climate-related disasters, economic instability, hunger and disease are converging to create unprecedented levels of human suffering. At the same time, humanitarian organizations are being forced to do more with less as global funding continues to decline.



Rahel Mwitula Williams Appointed ELCA Executive Director for Innovation



Chicago — Rahel Mwitula Williams has been appointed executive director for the Innovation unit of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Mwitula Williams has served as the ELCA's interim executive director for Innovation and its director for innovation and ideas since 2025. Previously, she served as director for ELCA Global Mission Funding (2019-2023), manager for ELCA Donor Relations (2016-2019), and executive coordinator at the Ancona School in Chicago (2007-2012).

Introducing **breeze**

**Keeping our congregation connected
through personalized accounts,
events, giving, and much more—all in
one easy-to-use platform**

**Check your email for an invites
and updates from Pastor Joel**



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KEEPING UP WITH THE LSS

THE LATEST HEADLINES AND ARTICLES
FROM THE LOWER SUSQUEHANNA SYNOD



What Does it Mean to be Reconciling in Christ?

In the Lower Susquehanna Synod of the ELCA we feed the hungry as we have been fed by Christ. We welcome with full participation and inclusion all who are seeking God's love and grace. We welcome all because God welcomes all, regardless of race or culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, or relationship status. We welcome all without regard to addictions, physical or mental health, imprisonment, socio-economic circumstances or anything that too often divides us. Our unity is in Jesus Christ.



Alive 2026: Middle-School Nawakwa Retreat



ALIVE is our annual synod middle-school retreat. Our annual fall retreat is scheduled for September 25-27, 2026, at Camp Nawakwa. Congregations from across our synod gather with their adult advisors and youth for this traditionally early fall weekend that includes large group gatherings with singing led by our ALIVE Alumni Band, theme-centered videos and stories, and games, interspersed with small group gatherings.

Caring for the Earth: Stories From Faith Communities

Four leaders from ministries across the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) share how their faith journeys intersect with their commitment to creation care in the seven-part short film series "Caring for the Earth: Stories From Faith Communities." The free-to-access series is available now.



Finding Holy Rhythms in Busy Seasons



As summer winds down, many of us find ourselves looking ahead to a fuller season. School schedules return, church programs begin again, meetings fill the calendar, and the pace of life starts to accelerate. Before fall ramps up, take an evening to pause, breathe, and consider how you want to move into this next season.

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THE PASTOR

Do you have a burning question about scripture or faith that you're dying to have answered? Well, now's your chance! By scanning the QR code on the page, you'll be taken to a form where you can submit a faith/scripture-based question for Pastor Joel to answer. If your question's selected, he'll respond in a written article appearing in our next issue.

Each submission may contain one well-thought question, and said question must be faith or scripture-based in some capacity. Please only submit to the form once per issue.

Example Questions:

- How do biblical texts apply to modern society?
- Is cussing a sin?
- Can Christians see "secular" therapists?
- Can God forgive me?

CHALLENGING THE NARRATIVE

ARTICLE ADAPTED FROM FRIENDS
AND NEIGHBORS SOCIAL MEDIA POST

Most of us have been given the dignity of closing our front door

People often point to an overflowing trash bag, a struggle with addiction, or a mental health crisis as proof that someone living outside is somehow different from the rest of us.

But look a little closer to home.

Housed neighborhoods have overflowing trash too. We just call it "trash day."

People living in homes struggle with addiction every single day. It just happens behind closed doors instead of on a sidewalk.

Mental illness exists in every neighborhood, every income bracket, every profession, and every family. The difference is that some people have walls, insurance, transportation, and privacy. Others have none of those things.

Homelessness doesn't create someone's humanity. It strips away their privacy.

When every part of your life happens in public, every mistake becomes public. Every bad day becomes visible. Every struggle becomes something strangers feel entitled to judge.

Most of us have been given the dignity of closing our front door.

Imagine if every argument, every relapse, every pile of laundry, every piece of trash, every panic attack, every hardship, every moment you weren't at your best happened where thousands of people could walk by, take a picture, or form an opinion.

"The more of you I inspect, the more of me I see reflect."

The more we separate ourselves from people experiencing homelessness, the easier it becomes to forget how much we actually have in common.

"The more of you I inspect, the more of me I see reflect."

Compassion begins when we stop asking, "What's wrong with them?" and start asking, "What would my life look like if I had to survive every day without privacy, stability, or support?"



ADVOCACY ALERTS

**THE LATEST HEADLINES AND ARTICLES
FROM LUTHERAN ADVOCACY MINISTRY IN
PENNSYLVANIA AND ELCA ADVOCACY**

LAMPa Alerts

- Support PA's Investment in Feeding the Hungry
- Support Data Center Moratorium, Thoughtful Regulation
- Protect Marriage Equality in PA
- Tell Gov. Shapiro to Stand for Welcome of Immigrants
- Give Pennsylvanians a Clean Slate for Housing
- Protect Against LGBTQ+ Discrimination in PA



ELCA Alerts

- Take Action to Support Survivors and End Human Trafficking
- Support Essential Hunger and Agriculture Funding
- Support the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding Schools Act
- Reject Voting Barriers and Oppose the SAVE Act



GARDENING FOR ALL

**A MESSAGE FROM HEATHER LEHMAN,
UNION'S GARDEN GURU!**

With York experiencing temperatures near 100°F and a RealFeel of 108°F, it's hard to ignore the value of trees and green spaces. Urban parks and community gardens aren't just beautiful—they're essential infrastructure. Trees provide shade that can make surfaces 20–45°F cooler, while plants naturally cool the air through evapotranspiration. Together, they help make urban neighborhoods more livable during extreme heat.

And the benefits don't stop there. Green spaces improve air quality by filtering pollutants, provide habitat for birds and pollinators, absorb stormwater to reduce flooding, and create places that support both physical and mental well-being.



**THAT'S WHY INVESTING IN URBAN
COMMUNITY GARDENS MATTERS. THEY
DON'T JUST GROW VEGETABLES AND
FLOWERS—THEY GROW HEALTHIER,
MORE RESILIENT NEIGHBORHOOD**

That's why investing in urban community gardens matters. They don't just grow vegetables and flowers—they grow healthier, more resilient neighborhoods. Every tree planted, every garden tended, and every patch of green helps create a cooler, cleaner, and more connected York.

On days like today, I'm especially thankful to everyone who has helped grow the community garden at Union Lutheran Church, York's East campus bringing more green space into the city. And a quick reminder to let your water hoses flow for just a few seconds before spraying plants, pets or even kids. It's hot out there!"

Support **Union Lutheran** through Community Aid

now with an
updated donation
list

Starting July 1st, Community Aid will
now accept household items,
electronics, toys, and more!

Use the donation code on the back during
drop off at any Community Aid and Union
will receive a partnership credit

Help support our community

Flip for
guidelines



Donation Guidelines

Donation code:
20165

Electronics

COMPUTER MONITORS	FLAT PANELS TVS
COMPUTER ACCESSORIES	RADIOS
VCR & DVD PLAYERS	ALARM CLOCKS
SMALL KITCHEN APPLIANCES	

Toys

PLASTIC TOYS
GAMES
DOLLS
PUZZLES
TOY CARS

Household Items

POTS/PANS	PET ITEMS
DISHES/STONEWARE	LAMPS
GLASSWARE	SHELVES

SCAN THE QR
CODE FOR AN
EXPANDED
DONATION LIST



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

COMMUNITY THANK YOU'S!

A Source of Hope
In Time of Need

Providing
Emergency Services



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York, PA 17401

May 2026

Dear Union Lutheran Church Staff,

Your generosity has been noted by your recent donation of \$817 from the estate of one of your church members. Please share with the family our gratitude for the gift. With the busy summer months bringing heat and sunshine, your donation will provide many needed services especially for those that need emergency food.

On behalf of the WELL Board, clients, volunteers and staff, we thank you for the financial contribution. Your gift will allow us to continue efforts to serve our neighbors who are facing a shortage of food and supplies during these challenging times.

We gratefully acknowledge your support of our mission.

With gratitude,

LuAnn Smith
WELL Board

UPCOMING EVENTS

JULY

Community Ice Cream Social 23rd
Union East Campus

Youth Program Fair 23rd
Union East Campus

Men's Night Out 28th
Union East Campus

AUGUST

National Night Out 4th
Union West Campus

Community Breakfast 8th
Union West Campus

Paint Night at Union 21st
Union West Campus

Community Breakfast 29th
Union West Campus



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