



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

Southwestern Pennsylvania

Synod supplement

A walk from darkness into light

Come with me to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. I was there in January with the Bishop's Academy trip to the Holy Land, and was blessed to be part of the first Lutheran eucharist ever held there.

To get there we have to go into the Old City of Jerusalem, through the New Gate. Just outside is a busy Jerusalem street with four lanes of traffic. But inside the streets are too narrow for vehicles, so we'll have to walk.

It's not far, and it's all downhill. The streets themselves are steps with high walls on either side, built up of ancient stones and rebuilt over the ages. The walls are actually buildings built up against each other, leaving only enough space for narrow walking-streets between them.

Through half-open doors we can see courtyards inside, and mosaics and gardens. But out here in the street, only stone. Stone paving, stone steps, stone walls, stone arches. Every surface is worn smooth by centuries of feet and hands passing by.

Down a little passage to the left, here, past the souvenir stores, through an iron gate and now we're in a wide courtyard. The street does pass on from here to other places and is called the Via Dolorosa, but down the wide steps to our left is an open courtyard filled with people. At the far side is the main door, a Byzantine archway, which leads into the first room.

It's dimly lit inside, and people are waiting in line to kneel and touch the stone where Jesus' body is said to have been washed. But come past them, to the right. Don't stop at the supposed tomb of Adam. Don't go down those steps to where the true cross is supposed to have been found.

But come straight in here, a cathedral of stone with a high dome, a shaft of sunlight coming through. Here, in the center is a stone

shrine that tourists crawl through to touch the place where Jesus was buried. The line promises more than an hour's wait.

But come, around the back. Look, here's a small neglected door almost out of sight and through it a chapel that looks like it has not been used since the 18th century. There is an old altar falling apart, literally buried in dust, and a single light bulb hanging by a wire from the ceiling.

And there, on the far side, is a low opening where the building's stones give way to living rock, where an empty tomb is lit by only three small candles. I'll go in first, all the way to the back. There's just room for you, but we both have to be hunched all the way over to our knees.

There's no line here. No crowd. There's nothing really to see, except for two or three low benches where the dead once lay. But in this dark, cramped space, I want to share a thought with you: The most amazing thing about this place is not the stones that have been here for centuries but the story of life and hope that began here, and now lives and breathes in millions of living stones all over the world, in the lives of people who belong to Jesus Christ.

Our Lord Jesus did not rise from the dead to make these stones into a museum but to give life and hope to many whose lives were just like this small, dark, suffocating space.

That's it. Just that one thought. Now let's get out of this cramped space, let's straighten up and walk out into the light and live!

With you in Christ,
Kurt F. Kusserow, bishop



Enter the Church of the Holy Sepulchre at this arched doorway.

Mark Allen Powell to speak at assembly

By Kirk Bish

The Rev. Mark Allen Powell will be keynote speaker at the annual assembly of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, addressing the theme of the assembly: “God’s Work. Our Hands.” The 22nd synod assembly will be held June 18-20 on the campus of Thiel College in Greenville.

Powell is professor of New Testament at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, and an internationally known theologian and Bible scholar. He is the author of more than 25 books and 100 articles and enjoys popular appeal among Christian groups for his work in spiritual formation and Christian identity.

His most recent work, *What Do They Hear? Bridging the Gap Between Pulpit & Pew*, is a resource for pastors who wonder how their people hear and respond to their sermons.

Powell’s 2004 book, *Loving Jesus*, combines biblical interpretation with autobiographical reflection to provide a poignant and often amusing guide through the haze of contemporary spirituality.

He also authored the massive *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Christian Music*, regarded as the definitive reference work on the subject. A best-seller among fans of popular Christian music, it is also a useful guide to those who want to evaluate the music critically or analyze the Christian music scene for what it reveals about American religion.

Powell is best known for his work in areas of literary criticism, Matthean studies and historical Jesus studies.

His next major project involves serving as editor for the forthcoming



The Rev. Mark Allen Powell

third edition of the Harper-Collins Bible dictionary, the world’s best-selling dictionary of the Bible.

ELCA representative

The Rev. A. Craig Settlage will be the ELCA representative to the assembly.

Since 2007, Settlage has served as director for mission support within the Synodical Relations section of the Office of the Presiding Bishop. He joined the staff of the ELCA at its inception, serving as director for candidacy in the Division for Ministry from 1988 to 1995 and then as associate executive director of that unit.

Settlage has also served as the director for rostered and authorized ministries in the Vocation and Education program unit, where he was responsible for policies and programs related to the standards and support of those serving in ordained and rostered lay ministries.

Settlage represented the ELCA

in the development of the “orderly exchange” process between the ELCA and its full-communion partners and served as liaison from the churchwide office to full-communion and ecumenical partners related to ministry issues.

Assembly activities

Bishop Kurt F. Kusserow will preside at the assembly.

Agenda items include reports of the officers, the report of synod council and the adoption of the 2010 budget. Consideration will also be given to memorials and resolutions transmitted from the conferences and congregations of the synod.

The assembly will elect members to the synod council and the committee on discipline, as well as representatives to the boards of directors of synod-related agencies and institutions.

A Mission Festival will be held Friday evening, featuring displays and activities by synod standing committees and synod-related agencies and institutions.

Youth Convo will again be held in conjunction with the assembly under the direction of the synod’s Committee on Youth Ministry.

Members of the assembly planning committee are the Rev. Kirk Bish, chairperson; the Rev. Eric Riesen, secretary; the Rev. April Michaelson Dailey; Jeannette Christensen; Michael Durkin; R. Brandon James; Sylvia Lynn; the Rev. Larry Mort; Barbara Ravenstahl; Jane Scheeser; and the Rev. Daniel Smail. □

Bish is assistant to the bishop and secretary of the SWPA synod.



RICHARD KRUG

St. John's completed Grace cathedral labyrinth.

St. John's, North Versailles, completes labyrinth

By Brenda Neundorf

Moliere wrote, "Long is the road from conception to completion." The labyrinth committee of St. John's Lutheran Church in North Versailles can attest to that.

The road began in 2006 when St. John's member Sue Harer arranged to borrow the painted canvas labyrinth made by the youth of House of Prayer Lutheran Church, Aliquippa, which she experienced at synod assembly. St. John's used that labyrinth for a week during Lent 2007. The idea grew that St. John's could create its own labyrinth, and members did precisely that. Dedication was Dec. 21.

Labyrinths have existed for more than 3,000 years and are found in many cultures of North and South America, Europe, Africa and Asia. After the Enlightenment, labyrinths became relatively unknown—until today, when they are experiencing a rebirth throughout the world.

The Chartres labyrinth was constructed around A.D. 1201 in the stone floor of Chartres Cathedral, France. Its distinguishing features are 11 circuits with turns arranged in four quadrants, lunations or teeth around the perimeter, and a six-petal rosette

in the center. Medieval Christians visited Chartres and other cathedrals to walk the labyrinth as an alternative to taking the hazardous pilgrimage to Jerusalem to walk in the "footsteps of Christ."

Modern "pilgrims" walk the labyrinth as one of many tools to enhance prayer, contemplation, meditation and personal spiritual growth.

Unlike a maze, a labyrinth has one path that winds to the center. The weaving in and out of the labyrinth path is a metaphor of life with its many twists and turns.

Sometimes one feels very close to God or inner peace, sometimes very distant. The lesson of the labyrinth journey is that no matter where one is, you are still on the path. By striving and putting one foot in front of the other, eventually the goal, the center, will be reached.

St. John's planning committee decided to make a Grace Cathedral variation of the Chartres labyrinth, which has larger spaces between the turns or labryses. Perhaps the greatest challenge was figuring out how to draw the labyrinth on the large 30-by-30 foot canvas. Jack Sutter

created several tools, including a 17-foot compass with holes drilled at appropriate spaces so pencils could be placed for drawing lines.

Bill Boyd, a draftsman, was invaluable in helping create templates for the turns, petals and lunations. The dimensions and measurements of the labyrinth are proportionate and interrelated, based on the ancient practice of sacred geometry. After the outline was marked with pencil on the canvas, it was painted with purple paint.

The canvas and paint were purchased in May 2008 and work on the labyrinth began in August by finding the center of the canvas, which is much harder than it sounds. Next, 12 circles were drawn, leaving space to insert the labryses or turns. The petals and crosses were added to the center and finally the lunations drawn on the outer edge.

As each section was completed, masking tape was applied up to the drawn line to keep the painting as accurate as possible. Many helped, including Bill Boyd, Ruth Boyd and her niece Darlene Perrillo; Sally Kerchner; Jack Sutter; the Rev. Richard Krug; Ed and Sue Ward; Irene Gunderman; Marilyn Schulle; Vicki Runtich; Christine and Jonathon Lint; Leighanna Thomas; and Brenda Neundorf.

Labyrinths are being used today not only in religious and spiritual venues but also in schools, health-related facilities, prisons and in the corporate world.

St. John's will have periodic scheduled times when the labyrinth will be laid out and available for members and people in the community to walk and pray. □

Neundorf, a member of St. John's, is coordinator of the labyrinth project.

Southwestern Pennsylvania



GENE FOZARD

Trying out the new studio are Dennis Lane (left), the Rev. Paul Lubold, the Rev. Greg Held who hosts *Lutherans Alive!* and Myra Fozard.

Synod television studio gets new look

By Gene and Myra Fozard

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod television studio has undergone a complete renovation. The 20-year-old facility, which is used to produce 40 half-hour, interview-format shows plus other synodically related specials each year, was beginning to show its age.

George Salopek, television studio manager of Christian Associates of Southwestern Pennsylvania, visited the Perry Highway location and offered suggestions on facility upgrading and equipment relocation to improve the synod's in-house video capabilities.

Jerry Lynn acted as construction engineer and supervisor, craftsman and laborer. Other volunteers worked more than 440 hours on the project. Volunteers on the project included

Jerry's wife, Sylvia Lynn; the Rev. Greg Held; the Rev. Paul Lubold; Clayton Hartman; Gene and Myra Fozard and their grandchildren Renee, Ariel and Logan Watson; Dennis Lane; and Kaythe Schaefer.

Work began with the removal of a storage closet and doorway. With the sounds of drills, hammers and saws ringing out, the new studio and control rooms began to take shape. Studs were installed and plasterboard was hung, "mudded" and sanded. Then the paintbrushes and rollers did their work.

One purpose of the renovation project was to reduce noise transmission from the video director's area to the studio. A separate, double-walled control room now isolates computer and recording equipment noise and voices from the studio. Carpeting,

heavy drapes and acoustical tile on the walls and floor further reduce the noise transmission.

A window designed and built by Jerry Lynn enables the director in the control room to see into the studio. Two double-strength panes of laminated glass, separated by a dead-air space and set at opposing angles in a wooden frame offer an almost reflection- and glare-free view of the set.

Installation of an overhead lighting grid provides better placement and intensity control of the five lighting fixtures used to illuminate the studio.

The renovation added 10 percent to the usable floor space in the studio area, opening up new options for both camera placement and set arrangement.

On Dec. 9, the Rev. Greg Held hosted a *Lutherans Alive! Christmas Special* as the first show recorded in the remodeled facilities. Appropriately, the next program was an interview with construction boss Jerry Lynn and the story of his faith journey.

A grant from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans supplemented synodical funding of the renovation costs.

Lutherans Alive! can be viewed in Pittsburgh on Comcast channel 95 Monday through Friday at 10 a.m. and daily at 6 p.m. Outside the city, Comcast digital subscribers can find the program through On Demand by choosing menu options "Your Town," "Worship," "Christian Associates" and "Lutherans Alive." □

The next SWPA Synod supplement will appear in July. Deadline for submissions is April 10. Contact Judi Rogers at Rogerstrc@AOL.com or 412-247-1846.