

For Immediate Release...

Area Lutherans Prepare to Make Impact on “God’s Work, Our Hands Sunday”

HAMDEN, CONN.—Six Lutheran congregations across Greater New Haven are joining forces on Sunday, Sept. 11, to make a difference in their communities through **God’s Work, Our Hands Sunday**. This annual day of service is an opportunity for Lutheran congregations across the country to help others, while celebrating the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) as “one church, freed in Christ to serve and love our neighbor.”

In the New England Synod’s Greater New Haven Conference, volunteers from the six Lutheran congregations will be rolling up their collective sleeves to participate in a range of community service projects – from assembling “Welcome Home Kits” for former homeless shelter residents transitioning into housing, to packaging meal kits aimed at ending hunger in the community, and more.

“As Lutheran-flavored Christians, we believe that we are set free by God’s love and mercy to do nothing else than love our community and show our neighbors mercy,” said the Rev. Joshua Sullivan, pastor of Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church (CGSLC), Hamden, and Dean-elect of the Greater New Haven Conference, ELCA. “I am just so moved by the willingness of these six communities to get together and let God turn their hearts toward our hurting world.”

Other congregations participating in **God’s Work, Our Hands Sunday** are Bethesda Lutheran Church, New Haven; Emanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, New Haven; Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church, Branford; Trinity Lutheran Church, Milford; and Trinity Lutheran Church, New Haven.

According to Leo Goodrich, Vice-President of the CGSLC Church Council who, along with Rev. Sullivan, has been working with church and community leaders to organize this year’s day of service, approximately 65 volunteers from the six area ELCA churches will be participating.

“Never having done a conference-wide collaboration such as this, we were estimating a total of about 30 volunteers from the six churches,” said Goodrich. “We were overwhelmed by the response we received when 65 volunteers stepped forward, more than double what we expected. The main purpose of the event, of course, is to benefit our brothers and sisters in the community, but we also want to build relationships between the congregations so that we can collaborate on other projects in the future. Additionally, working together like this creates synergism to serve more people, because we collect donations toward the materials for the kits we are assembling from all the churches rather than from a single church.”

Many Hands Unite in Service

Following morning worship services at their own churches on Sunday, Sept. 11, volunteers from across the conference – most wearing yellow “God’s Work, Our Hands” T-shirts – will fan out to work on six different projects in the Greater New Haven area. Several of the projects were developed in collaboration with Dennis Velasquez and Margaret LeFever of the United Way of Greater New Haven.

At Trinity Lutheran, New Haven, volunteers will spend the afternoon assembling “Welcome Home Kits” for families transitioning out of a homeless shelter into a home of their own. Supplies for the kits collected at the churches include air mattresses, blankets, pillows, dishes, and pots and pans. These items will be delivered to Trinity Lutheran for assembly into the kits, and notes of hope and encouragement will be written by the volunteers and placed into the kits as well.

Over in Branford at Tabor Lutheran Church, conference volunteers will gather to assemble meal kits for the Outreach Program and End Hunger New England. A sum of \$2,400, which included donations from the conference congregations, was used to purchase materials to provide nearly 7,000 meals. The kits will be distributed to food pantries in New Haven, Hamden, Milford and Branford.

Other **God's Work, Our Hands Sunday** projects include an outdoor clean-up at the Keefe Community Center in Hamden; volunteering at the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen in New Haven and the Beth-El Center Soup Kitchen in Milford; and a diaper bank collection project to benefit the Diaper Bank of North Haven.

In the words of the ELCA:

“We are a church energized by lively engagement in faith and life. As we continue our tradition of service to our neighbor, we remember the words of Martin Luther: ‘Our faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing.’ With our hands, we do God’s work of restoring and reconciling communities in the name of Jesus Christ.”

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*For more information about **God's Work, Our Hands Sunday**, please contact Leo Goodrich at (203) 710-4981 (call or text), or leo.d.goodrich@gmail.com.*