

For Immediate Release...

Area Lutherans Make Impact on God's Work Our Hands Sunday

HAMDEN, CONN.—Six Lutheran congregations across Greater New Haven joined forces on Sunday, Sept. 11 to make a difference in their communities through God's Work Our Hands Sunday. This annual day of service was 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 rolled 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 of the Greater New Haven Conference, ELCA. “I was 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 who participated in God's Work Our Hands Sunday were 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 worked with church and community leaders to organize this year's day of service, more than 65 volunteers from the six area ELCA churches participated in the event.

“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, was to benefit our brothers and sisters in the community, but we also wanted 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 collected donations toward the materials for the kits we are assembling from all of 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 – fanned out to work on seven different projects in the Greater New Haven area. Several of the projects were developed in collaboration with Margaret LeFever and Dennis Velasquez of the United Way of Greater New Haven.

At Trinity Lutheran, New Haven, volunteers spent the afternoon assembling “Welcome Home Kits” for families transitioning out of a homeless shelter into a home of their own. The volunteers also wrote notes of hope and encouragement that were placed into the kits. Supplies for the kits had been collected at the six churches prior to the event, and included air mattresses, blankets, pillows, dishes, and pots and pans. The 22 kits that were assembled will be delivered by the United Way to the New Haven-based

organizations New Reach, Liberty Community Services, Columbus House, and Youth Continuum.

Over in Branford at Tabor Lutheran Church, conference volunteers gathered to assemble meal kits from supplies purchased from 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 meal kits will be distributed to food pantries in New Haven, Hamden, Milford and Branford.

Other God's Work Our Hands Sunday projects included an outdoor clean-up at the Keefe Community Center in Hamden; volunteering at the Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen in New Haven, including shifts at the soup kitchen on Temple St. and the drop-in center on State St.; preparing and distributing bag lunches at the Beth-El Center Soup Kitchen in Milford; and a diaper bank collection project spearheaded by the youth of Bethesda Lutheran, 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

PHOTO 1 CAPTION:

Volunteers from Christ the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Hamden clean up the grounds surrounding the Keefe Community Center in Hamden

PHOTO 2 CAPTION:

Volunteers from Trinity Lutheran Church and Emanuel Evangelical Lutheran Church, both in New Haven, and from the United Way of Greater New Haven, prepare Welcome Home Kits for families transitioning from homelessness into homes

PHOTO 3 CAPTION:

Youth members of Bethesda Lutheran Church, New Haven, stand behind the diapers they collected for the Diaper Bank of North Haven on God's Work Our Hands Sunday

MORE PHOTOS OF OTHER PROJECTS AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST