



NEW JERSEY SYNOD
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

Office of the Bishop 1930 Highway 33 Hamilton Square, NJ 08690 609-586-6800 FAX 609-586-3357 www.njsynod.org

August 19, 2013

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I just returned from our Churchwide Assembly in Pittsburgh, Pa. and felt it important to say a word about that experience. Under the theme of "Always Being Made New", the Assembly gathered for a week-long celebration of the ministry we do together in Jesus' name for the sake of the world. Each day was grounded in worship and small group Bible study. During the plenary sessions we listened to reports, engaged in discernment in order to lift our collective voice on important social issues and completed elections for Churchwide service. Most notable among those elections were those of a new presiding bishop and a secretary.

The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton, currently serving as bishop of the Northeast Ohio Synod, was elected to serve a six-year term as our presiding bishop. This came as a surprise to most of us. I believe this election was not an action of discontent about our current presiding bishop, Mark Hanson, but a vote about "making all things new" for the future. The great affection and admiration for Bishop Hanson's 12 years of leadership was palpable throughout the election process and in the Assembly's ovations for him. We will have a chance to thank Bishop Hanson for his work when he and his wife, Ione, are with us on September 29 for my installation. Bishop Eaton brings gifts for this ministry that include wisdom, humor and faithfulness ([click here for an article that gives a glimpse of these gifts](#)). She will take office on November 1.

Mr. David Swartling, who was with us for our Synod Assembly, had made it known that he would not stand for election for another term for secretary. The Churchwide Assembly elected the Rev. William Chris Boerger as secretary of the ELCA. Rev. Boerger just completed service as Bishop of the Northwest Washington Synod and is well qualified to assume this office on November 1.

Details about the elections and video archives of the whole Churchwide Assembly can be found at www.elca.org/assembly. Plenary sessions and each day's worship service are available to view. We pray for all of those elected to serve in Churchwide offices, on boards and commissions of our partner agencies and on our church council.

Reflecting on the whole Assembly, I cannot help but be amazed by the work we do together. This church, our church, is engaged in mission and ministry that changes lives for the better. A spirit of joy and thanksgiving for all of the ways we serve in Jesus' name permeated the entire Assembly. We asked congress for comprehensive and just immigration reform, we lifted our voices and our prayers to address gun violence, we adopted the social statement "Criminal Justice: Hearing the Cries" and we approved a 25th Anniversary Campaign to raise funds to expand our capacity for ministry. You will hear more about the actions of the Assembly in the days and weeks ahead.

Thank you to the voting members from our Synod who faithfully listened, prayed and worked during this Churchwide Assembly. Please ask them to share their reflections with you.

I also need to mention the changes that are happening in regard to Portico Benefits and specifically, the health care portion of those benefits. Rostered leaders for whom Portico is their primary health care provider should have received an email this week outlining the changes prompted by the Affordable Care Act. Rostered leaders and congregation councils will need to make decisions regarding their level of coverage and register their decision online. The Gold + option is the one that most closely aligns with our current coverage. Details about all of the options are available at the website (www.porticobenefits.org). Please attend to these decisions as soon as possible. Complete compensation guidelines for our rostered leaders will be available following the September 21 synod council meeting.

Please continue to pray for our Synod in these days of leadership transition. Once staffing decisions have been sorted out and confirmed, I will communicate them with you.

Blessings and peace to you,



The Rev. Tracie L. Bartholomew
Bishop-elect

2013 Churchwide Assembly Voting Members

Bishop E. Roy Riley, Jr., Abiding Presence, Ewing
The Rev. Dean R. Brown, Holy Trinity, Red Bank
The Rev. Matthew Cimorelli, Reformation, West Long Branch
Elizabeth J. Cunniff, St. Mark, Hamilton
Amanda Gebhart, St. Michael, Cherry Hill
The Rev. Julia Haspel-Schoenfeld, Messiah, Oakland
Margaret S. Klophaus, Christ, Paramus
Raymond Kolison, Redeemer, Trenton
The Rev. Sara E. Lilja, St. Matthew, Moorestown
The Rev. Christine R. Regan, St. Stephen, Woodbury
Bill Riley, St. Paul, Jersey City
Brian M. Slauch, St. Matthew, Moorestown
Lynn Tarallo, Christ, Whiting
Sandi Williams-Hagins Bethany, Jersey City
David C. Wirth, Good Shepherd, Somerville