



**THIRTY-FIFTH ASSEMBLY
NEW JERSEY SYNOD
May 13, 2023
The Grounds for Sculpture
Hamilton, New Jersey**

MONDAY/TUESDAY, MAY 8/9, 2023

The Synod was given the opportunity to attend virtual Pre-Assembly workshops [BR page 7 & 8].

**GATHERING IN GOD'S LOVE
9:30 AM, MAY 13, 2023**

Assembly musicians Pastors Kat Irwin, Raymond Kolison, Carmine Pernini, and Jay Unzaga led the Assembly in the opening song. Bishop Tracie Bartholomew welcomed those in attendance and those viewing the livestream to the 35th Synod Assembly. Pastor Maristela Freiberg was invited to make an announcement about Spanish translation.

Bishop Bartholomew addressed the Assembly with the acknowledgement that we are gathered in this beautiful space - The Grounds for Sculpture – which stands on part of the traditional territory of the Lenni-Lenape, called “Lenapehoking.” The Lenape people lived in harmony with one another upon this territory for thousands of years. During the colonial era and early federal period, many were removed west and north, but some also remain among the three continuing historical tribal communities of the region: The Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation; the Ramapough Lenape Nation; and the Powhatan Lenape Nation. We acknowledge the Lenni-Lenape as the original people of this land and their continuing relationship with their territory.

Bishop Bartholomew directed participants to the Order for the Opening of the Assembly found in the Worship booklet. The voting platform Vpoll was reviewed and voting members participated in practice sessions.

The concept of a Consent Agenda for the *2023 Assembly Agenda* [BR pages 5], *Rules of Procedure for the Thirty-fifth Synod Assembly* [BR pages 10 & 11], *Appointment of Assembly Committees* [projected through Zoom] and *2022 Assembly Minutes* [BR Section II].

Lead with Love

**Thirty-Fifth New Jersey Synod Assembly
Grounds for Sculpture, Hamilton, New Jersey
May/Mayo 13, 2023**

8:45 AM

Registration Opens/Registro Abierto

9:30am

Gathering in God's Love/Reunidos em el amore de Dios

Songs/Canciones

Welcome/ Bienvenida and Land Acknowledgement/Reconocimiento de tierras

Introduction to Assembly (Vpoll practice)/Introduccion a la Asamblea

Consent Agenda – Minutes, Agenda, Rules of Procedure, Committees

Agenda de Consentimiento, Reglas de Procedimiento, Comités

Introductions/Introducciones

Lead with Love mission moment/Liderar con Amor momento de misión

- 10:30 ***Hearing the Word/Eschuchando la Palabra***
Song/Canción
Nominating Committee Report/Informe del Comité de Nominaciones
Report of the Secretary/Informe del Secretario
Active Listening Bible study/Estudio Bíblico de Escucha Activa
2024 Spending Plan Presentation/Introducción al Plan de Gastos 2024
Elections/Elecciones
Bishop’s Report/Informe de la Obispa
- 11:45 ***Sharing the Meal/Compartiendo la Cena***
Song/Canción
Holy Communion/Santa Comunión
- 12:15 Lunch/Almuerzo
- 1:15 ***Sending Us in Love/Enviándonos en Amor***
Song/Canción
Elections (if needed)/Elecciones (si es necesario)
Churchwide Report/Informe de la Represente de la ELCA
2024 Spending Plan Adoption/Adopción del 2024 plan de gastos
Lead with Love Mission Moment/ Liderar con Amor momento de misión – Cross Roads
Resolutions/Memorials/Resoluciones
Lead with Love as we Go and...!/Liderar con Amor a medida que Vamos y . . . !
- 2:30 Songs/Canciones
Closing liturgy/Clausura de la Asamblea
- 3:00 Assembly is finished – participants are free to wander the grounds until 7:00 PM.
Asemblea está terminada participantes están libres de caminar por los “Grounds” hasta las 7:00 PM

WIFI: Grounds For Sculpture Public WIFI (no password required)

The offering is designated for *ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response*.
La ofrenda se designa para *ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response*.

**NEW JERSEY SYNOD, ELCA
RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE THIRTY-FIFTH SYNOD ASSEMBLY**

1. Fifty percent (50%) of voting members who have confirmed registration upon the beginning of the assembly shall constitute a quorum as required by constitution (S7.14.).

2. Two (2) lay representatives of Synodically Authorized Worshiping Communities of the New Jersey Synod shall be given voice and vote during the Assembly.
3. Persons who are on the roster of the New Jersey Synod, ELCA, On Leave From Call or Retired, Living Out-of-State, but who are serving New Jersey Synod congregations/worshiping communities by special appointment, and those Retired Pastors Living Out-of-State who are actively engaged in the life and ministry of the New Jersey Synod shall be given voice and vote during the Assembly.
4. Persons on the roster of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in a Synod other than the New Jersey Synod, but who are serving New Jersey Synod congregations by special appointment, shall be given voice and vote, during the Assembly.
5. Persons who are not on the roster of the ELCA, but who are serving New Jersey Synod congregations/worshiping communities by special appointment, shall be given voice, not vote, during the Assembly.
6. Persons who are not on the roster of the ELCA, but who are serving New Jersey Synod congregations/worshiping communities by special appointment and are ordained ministers of another Lutheran church body that is a member of the Lutheran World Federation or of a church body with which a relationship of full communion has been declared and established by a Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA shall be given voice and vote during the Assembly.
7. Chairs of Mission Teams and Committees listed by the Synod Council shall be given voice, not vote, on matters pertaining to their work during the Assembly.
8. Voting will take place in a variety of ways throughout the assembly. These may include electronic voting using Vpoll, voice votes, and raising voting cards. To have an abstention recorded, notify the secretary. Abstentions do not count in the vote totals.
9. Voting members need a smartphone or tablet in order to use Vpoll for voting. Unique login credentials will be provided upon registration.
10. When an item of business is opened by the chair for discussion, those voting members wishing to speak move to a floor microphone. Before speaking, each person must indicate their name, congregation name and location. Members must specify if they are speaking for or against the item under consideration.
11. Debate shall be limited to two minutes per person per issue. Time will be kept by the Secretary. Debate will terminate when three speakers have been heard on each side, unless otherwise determined by a majority vote of the voting members present and voting.
12. Late resolutions may be considered with the approval of the assembly. A form (found on the NJ Synod website) for late resolutions must be submitted by 10:00am to the secretary or chair of Reference and Counsel with the required signatures of 10 voting members present at the assembly. The Synod Council and/or Executive Committee may submit resolutions directly to the Assembly.
13. All resolutions shall be reviewed by the Committee of Reference and Counsel, which, when reporting to the Assembly, may:
 1. recommend approval;
 2. recommend disapproval;
 3. recommend referral to the Synod Council; or
 4. recommend a substitute motion to the Assembly
14. Floor nominations for at-large positions may be made at the time of the Nominating

Committee report and require completion of the [electronic nomination form](#).

15. All reports published in the Bulletin of Reports shall be received by the Assembly by virtue of that fact without vote.

RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR ADOPTION OF THE 2024 SPENDING PLAN

1. At the time of the introduction of the Spending Plan, discussion shall be limited to questions for clarification and information and the serving of notices of intent to move an amendment to the Spending Plan.
2. Voting Members desiring to present motions germane to the Spending Plan shall be given until **12:00 noon on Saturday, May 13** to submit written notice of such intent to the Treasurer, James Harris.
3. The Fiscal Management, Administration, and Property Committee shall meet with voting members proposing an amendment.
4. At the time appointed for the adoption of the Spending Plan, the Fiscal Management, Administration, and Property Committee shall report to the Assembly all proposed amendments, with the Committee's recommendations.
5. When motions germane to the Spending Plan are presented on the Floor of the Assembly, the Fiscal Management, Administration, and Property Committee shall have an opportunity to respond to the recommendations. Any Voting Member wishing to increase a line item in any area of the Spending Plan shall propose a source of funding.

MINUTES OF THE 2022 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

The Minutes [BR Section II] of the Thirty-fourth Synod Assembly of the New Jersey Synod, ELCA, May 6 & 7, 2022, based at St. Paul, East Windsor, New Jersey, as our official record.

APPOINTMENT OF 2023 ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE

Deacon Bill Lawrence, St. Matthew, Moorestown
Karen Moriarity, St. Thomas, Brick
LuAnn Barnes, Staff
The Rev. Blake Scalet, Secretary

There being no objections to the Agenda of the 2023 35th Synod Assembly, Rules of Procedure for the 35th Synod Assembly, Appointment of 2023 Assembly Committees, or 2022 Assembly Minutes the items are approved by consent.

The Assembly continued with introductions of resource persons available during the Assembly to assist voting members and the Bishop during the Assembly. They include Pastor Blake Scalet, Secretary; Arundel Clark, Vice President; Mary Scout, Parliamentarian, and LuAnn Barnes, Executive Administrative Assistant to the Bishop. Dan Egan and Dave Quinnan are again serving as our sound and media technicians. Anthony Trump and Rob Rinderer, St. Paul, Beachwood, and Dawn Roberts were available for technical assistance. Simultaneous Spanish translation was provided by Edward Correa. Bishop Bartholomew also introduced Churchwide Representative The Rev. Amy Ruemann, ELCA Senior Director for Witness in Society.

ROSTERED LEADERS NEW TO THE NEW JERSEY SYNOD SINCE THE 2022 SYNOD ASSEMBLY

A prerecorded video of those new to our roster was shown. The following rostered leaders entered the New Jersey Synod since the 2022 Synod Assembly, through ordination or transfer from another synod. We welcome each to our community, and offer our prayers and our support for their ministry. Those persons are:

Ordained for First Call in New Jersey

Dianne Lewis, Menzi Nkambule

April 15, 2023 Ordination

Mary Anne (Psomi) Psomas-Jackloski

Received by Transfer from Another Synod

Eleanor and Robert Federwitz, Joseph Graumann, Dwight Mason, Jacob Simpson

ROSTERED LEADER RECOGNITIONS

Bishop Bartholomew acknowledged those rostered leaders who recently retired and those celebrating significant anniversaries. The Bulletin of Reports [BR pages 24-26] contains a full list of anniversaries and our retired pastors and deacons.

Newly Retired since the 2022 Assembly

Hans Arnesen, Thomas Dorsey, Mona Fitch-Elliott, Kathleen Harris, Erin Kinahan,
Leah Lavelle, Patricia Olausen, Jeffrey Ziegler

LEAD WITH LOVE MISSION MOMENT

God's Holy Darkness

by Sharei Green and Beckah Selnick, illustrated by Nikki Faison

Continuing our journey of being an anti-racist synod, Bishop Bartholomew welcome Pastor Christa Compton, Gloria Dei, Chatham, who led Assembly through a time of exploring positive ways darkness is used throughout Scripture through the children's book *God's Holy Darkness*.



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**HEARING THE WORD
10:30 AM**

The session began with Assembly singing *You Are Holy*.

2023 REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Rev. Blake Scalet, St. John’s, Summit and Synod Secretary presented the Report of the Nominating Committee [BR, Section 1 Page 16].

At-Large Synod Council Youth - Term Ending 2025 (1 to be elected at Assembly)

Grant Lefchak, Resurrection, Hamilton Square

Bishop Bartholomew asked for additional nominations for At-Large Synod Council Youth. No nominations were made. The Chair then declared the nominations closed for the category At-Large Synod Council Youth, term ending 2025.

Synod Vice President - Term Ending 2027

Arundel Clarke, Prince of Peace, Princeton Junction

Bishop Bartholomew asked for additional nominations for Synod Vice President. No nominations were made. The Chair then declared the nominations closed for the category Synod Vice President, term ending 2027.

Synod Secretary - Term Ending 2027

The Rev. Blake Scalet, St. John’s, Summit

Bishop Bartholomew asked for additional nominations for Synod Secretary. No nominations were made. The Chair then declared the nominations closed for the category Synod Secretary, term ending 2027.

Shore Mission District – Term Ending 2026 (1 to be elected)

The Rev. James McKinley, Immanuel, Jackson

The Rev. Pamela Werner, St. James, Folsom

Bishop Bartholomew asked for additional nominations for Shore Mission District - Clergy. No nominations were made. The Chair then declared the nominations closed for the category Shore Mission District, term ending 2026.

SYNOD COUNCIL - (to be ratified by Synod Assembly):

Mission District Elections - Terms Expiring 2026

Delaware	Clergy	Rev. José Escalera, Temple/Misión Luterana Reconciliación, Pennsauken
Gateway	Lay	Patricia Espejo, Grace, Bayonne
Middle	Clergy	Rev. Miles Hopgood, Abiding Presence, Ewing
Northern	Clergy	Rev. Lisa Holliday, Trinity, Bogota
Western	Lay	Robert Bowden, Abiding Peace, Budd Lake - 2 nd term

Ballot 1 will take place later in the session.

REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Pastor Scalet continued with presentation of the Report of the Secretary. Secretary Scalet reported on a proposed amendment to our synod constitution. Because this was not announced six months in advance, we will be receiving notice of this amendment [BR page 40] today and then will vote on it at next year's assembly. It is an amendment to a recommended section of the constitution dealing with quorum for synod assembly. The synod council approved amendment reads: - *S7.14. One third of the members registered for the Synod Assembly shall constitute a quorum.* The amendment will be voted on at next assembly.

Secretary reported the synod council did adopt the classification for seasonal members so congregations may choose to include that classification in their congregation constitutions when they update them. The Synod Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions will be updated to reflect the required changes made at the 2022 Churchwide Assembly and posted to our synod website.

ACTIVE LISTENING BIBLE STUDY

The Rev. Sara Lilja, Assistant to the Bishop; Syndey Mastropasqua, Grace, River Edge; Ernest Hall, Redeemer, Trenton, and The Rev. James Egan, St. Paul, East Windsor, led the Assembly in an active listening Bible Study reflecting on 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

REPORT OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL

Introduction of the 2024 Spending Plan

The session continued with the presentation of the proposed 2024 Spending Plan [BR pages 12-15.] Bishop Bartholomew called on The Rev. Dean Brown, Assistant to the Bishop, and member of the Fiscal Management, Administration, and Property Committee (FMAP). He began the report by expressing thanks for the generosity of congregations through mission support sharing. The 2024 Spending Plan contains a projection of revenues as well as the financial strategy for carry out the mission of our Synod. Aretha and Willie Richardson, Trinity, Jersey City; Jill Weidner, Good Shepherd, Somerville; The Rev. Moacir Weirich, St. Stephan's Grace Community, Newark; Kimberly and The Rev. Danielle McCleary, St. Matthew, Secaucus; Harry Nelson, Bethlehem, Dorothy, and The Rev. Susan Jones, Holy Cross, Toms River, all lifted up examples of faith renewing experiences allocated through our Mission Support. Bishop Bartholomew expressed thanks for the Fiscal Management, Administration and Property Committee's thoughtful work in bringing the 2024 Spending Plan to the Assembly.

The 2024 Spending Plan will be brought to the floor for action later in the Assembly.

ELECTIONS– BALLOT #1

Bishop Bartholomew instructed voting members to go the Vpoll site for the voting session. Bishop Bartholomew instructed Voting Members to cast their vote for the first category to ratify the Mission District elections. The category was closed and results reported. The number of affirmations cast: 304. The Mission District elections were ratified.

Voting continued and Bishop Bartholomew instructed Voting Members to cast their vote for Synod Vice President. Voting was closed and results reported.

Synod Vice President, term ending 2027

Number of Votes Cast	301
Election Complete	Yes

The Chair declared Arundel Clarke elected as Synod Vice President.

Synod Secretary, term ending 2027

Number of Votes Cast 298
Election Complete Yes

The Chair declared The Rev. Blake Scalet elected as Synod Secretary.

Synod Council Youth, term ending 2025

Number of Votes Cast 298
Election Complete Yes

The Chair declared Grant Lefchak elected as Synod Council Youth.

Shore Mission District – term ending 2026

Number of Votes Cast 297
Election Complete Yes
James McKinley 55
Pamela Werner 242

The Chair declared Pamela Werner elected as Synod Council clergy from the Shore Mission District.

REPORT OF THE BISHOP TO THE ASSEMBLY

Synod Vice President Arundel Clarke assumed the chair during the Report of the Bishop. The text of Bishop Bartholomew’s report follows:

In 1965, Hal David and Burt Bacharach composed the song “What the world needs now” against the backdrop of a country divided by the Vietnam War. Jackie DeShannon and Dionne Warwick each recorded it to critical and popular acclaim. The lyrics are rather simple: What the world needs now, is love, sweet love, it’s the only thing that there’s just too little of; what the world needs now, is love, sweet love, no not just for some, but for everyone. Now, 58 years later, these lyrics seem to be written for our time: what the world needs now, is love, sweet love, no not just for some, but for everyone.

We see the need in studies that tell us teenagers are more lonely and socially isolated than any previous generation. We see it in the rampant gun violence that plagues neighborhoods across the country. We see the need for this love when political disagreement turns to fractured families and congregations. We see it in places where anti-trans legislation tries to erase the very existence of God’s beloved children. We see the need for this love, sweet love, in places where hate-filled language is accepted as the way we talk to one another. What the world needs now is love, sweet love. I could go on and on – but you well know the reality in which we find ourselves.

Into this, we dare to gather in assembly with the theme and call to Lead with Love. Gathered in the loving embrace of our savior, we are bold to believe that we can and will Lead with Love. Empowered by the Spirit of the risen Christ, we can show the world God’s love for all creation – every person, every community, every part of the cosmos.

I have seen this church -- our congregations, our synod, and the churchwide expression experiencing and sharing this sweet love with each other and with the world around us. You have as well.

More than 550 of us gathered on a warm September Saturday at Six Flags Great Adventure for Synod Day which included a ministry fair, worship, lunch, and riding rides. We experienced the sweet love of Jesus as we sang and danced and learned and gave witness to a God who delights in relationships. We hope to do it again in 2024. We are connected to each other in ways we never would have imagined had it not been for the pandemic years – holding educational events online, welcoming worshipers from across the country or world into our digital sanctuaries, meeting as council, often with better attendance when we zoom. We navigated these changes out of

necessity and are continuing them because they work to connect us with each other and offer ways for strangers to peek in on our ministry. I'm still not convinced that offering the sacraments online is the right way to go, but we're praying and studying and asking the questions.

I have prayed with and listened to you – lay leaders and pastors and deacons serving in congregations as we gathered online for a time of check-in and support. You have shared your joys and your struggles with each other. Treasurers, chief lay officers, office administrators and our rostered leaders have responded throughout the year to my invitations to meet, and in those meetings, Jesus is present.

I have been with and seen your congregation in worship – where people of differing educational, economic, and ethnic backgrounds come together to hear the word, share the supper, and praise the Lord. We take it for granted sometimes, that these intergenerational, diverse gatherings happen week in and week out – but these are glimpses of the love of God in action. Bringing us together with folks we might not ever know otherwise and making us one family.

One such gathering I was proud to be a part of was at Prince of Peace in Princeton Junction for their Joyful Noise worship service. Once a month on Sunday afternoon, Prince of Peace welcomes people with special needs and their families to lead a worship service where it's ok to get up and dance, sit on a bean bag instead of the pew, ask questions out loud, and where everyone holds the prayer rope while reciting the Lord's prayer. I know there are a couple of other places that host similar services to welcome those who often feel unwelcome at more formal worship opportunities. Thank you for sharing the sweet love of Jesus in this tangible way.

Because worship is at the heart of what we do and who we are, you've invited me to be part of joyful celebrations for anniversaries, on ordinary Sundays, and for bittersweet services of holy closure. We've been together for ordinations and installations. Through music, dance, liturgy, and fellowship, we have been church together. In every place, the love of God in Christ gathers, feeds, and sends us back into the world.

I've been with you as you've said farewell to your pastor and then enter a time of transition, wondering and worrying when or if you'll get another pastor. I know it's an anxious time being in this kind of transition. We have more than 25 congregations looking for a pastor - either part-time or full-time and another 18 in transition but not yet looking for a pastor. Part of my role in loving you is telling the truth – whether we want to hear it or not. Across the ELCA, there are not enough pastors to fill this need. In December, an analysis showed there were close to 400 available ministers of word and sacrament compared to more than 1700 congregations looking for a pastor. I don't know how those numbers have changed since December.

So what does this mean? (A good Lutheran question). For us, this has meant stewarding conversations about collaboration, cooperation, and closure. Regardless of whether you are in a transition or not, these are conversations you should be having with yourselves and neighboring communities – ELCA and full communion partners alike.

How best do we serve the community in which we are planted? What is gained or what is lost if congregations share staff? How might we strengthen our witness and increase capacity for service?

We currently have three pairs of congregations who discerned that consolidating or joining together would result in stronger and more vital ministries than staying as stand-alone ministries. When I call your name, please stand so folks can see who you are and perhaps ask you questions about the process when they see you throughout the day.

First, we have Nativity in East Brunswick and Christ the King in Kendall Park – they are combining to become Abiding Love Lutheran Church in Kendall Park. Christ Our Savior and Redeemer, both in southern Jersey City are becoming Christ Our Redeemer and will use the Redeemer buildings on Warner Ave. And third, St. Mark in Morristown and Good Shepherd in Florham Park are consolidating and have become Amazing Grace Lutheran Church in Florham Park. These new congregations have spent long hours praying, asking questions, getting to know each other, and looking at their resources to determine how best to serve Christ's mission in the world.

They will need our prayers and our accompaniment as they step out in faith to become these new communities of God's love.

I can say with confidence, these will not be the last consolidations or mergers that we will have. What would happen if you joined with a neighboring congregation and offered Bible study, youth ministry, service projects, and worship together? Would sharing a pastor mean that one congregation worshiped on Sunday morning and another on Sunday evening or Wednesday evening? Where is God leading you today?

A second way we are addressing the needs of leadership in congregations is by raising up rostered leaders in different ways. In this past year, we have had two congregations identify a member to become their pastor. And both people have entered candidacy to become pastors through the alternate route known as TEEM (Theological Education for Emerging Ministries). Phil Sherzer at Prince of Peace in Denville and Vincent Piekarski at Holy Spirit in Villas are now enrolled in seminary while serving the pastoral needs of their respective congregations. Perhaps there is someone in your congregation whom God is calling to serve – if so, speak it out loud and invite them to consider candidacy.

Pastors, deacons (who can provide pastoral care, Christian education, lead social ministries, and preach), council leaders, Sunday school teachers, altar guild members, church musicians, food pantry volunteers, etc – this church needs all of us to Lead with Love for the sake of the world.

Now here's the other reality – we have what we need to be church today. Maybe not what was needed to be the church of our parents and grandparents, but we have what we need to be the church Christ needs today. We have the love of God in Christ pouring gifts abundantly into our lives – raising up leaders in new ways, giving us courage to experiment with how and where we gather, empowering us to engage our neighbors with the good news of Jesus. We have holy imaginations unleashed to ask “what if...”

What if we really believed we have what we need? What if God leads us in love so we actually try new ways of telling the timeless Gospel? What if our witness leads new people to hear and believe our message of grace? What if we dared to follow where the risen Christ is calling us so that holy chaos reigns? As I've said before, when a military chaplain is with their troops on the battlefield, they open the back of the truck which becomes an altar and with the Bible, bread and wine, they have what it takes to be church. We have no less.

Part of my call as bishop means that I have responsibilities across the whole church. For the past four years I have served as chair of the Conference of Bishops – which means I also serve as a voting member of the ELCA Church Council. While this mostly means extra meetings, it also means I get a close-up view of what this church looks like across the country and around the world. And it is a beautiful, if at times flawed, picture of how we are loving God and neighbor. We are a church that Leads with Love!

As you know, we had an ELCA churchwide assembly last August which, among other things, called for a Commission for A Renewed Lutheran Church to look at our governing documents, especially the statement of purpose and principles of organization for churchwide, synod, and congregations, through the lens of antiracism. 35 people were appointed by the church council to staff this commission – out of over 400 nominations, our own Alexandra Mack from Holy Trinity, Red Bank, was chosen to serve. Please pray for her and the commission as they begin their work this summer. The churchwide assembly gave the mandate that this commission will report to the 2025 churchwide assembly in preparation for a possible re-constituting convention. Our structure needs to serve our mission – not the other way around, so after 37 years of being the ELCA, it's time to see if that's still the way it is.

As we embrace our theme of Lead with Love, I cannot help but note that this could be the mantra of our synod leaders. Our synod council meets to conduct the business between assemblies – always with an eye toward taking the most loving action. Our officers, while volunteers, take their work seriously and offer their time graciously.

Last year I mentioned that our treasurer, Jim Harris would not serve another term. Well as you saw in Jersey Jottings, he had a change of heart and the synod council joyfully appointed him to another 4-year term which began with our fiscal year February 1, 2023.

With a grateful heart, I say thank you to Jim Harris, secretary Blake Scalet, and vice president Arundel Clarke. Please indulge me as I introduce and thank our synod staff, starting with those with whom we contract to serve specific tasks on a part time basis: Pastor Marc Stutzel coordinates our candidacy work while also serving full time as pastor of Christ, Woodcliff Lake; Pastor Becky Resch coordinates our first call theological education for those in their first 3 years of ordination while she also serves full time as the region 7 & 8 ELCA candidacy and leadership manager; Beth Peroni coordinates supply preaching coverage for our congregations without a regularly serving pastor – a challenging task as our available supply preachers is far less than the need; Matt McDevitt and Bob Poole serve as our property managers – though Bob Poole has been out since mid-Dec following surgery and rehab; Tom Kull serves as our real estate coordinator in selling buildings that have been turned over to us when a congregation closes – Tom works with realtors, attorneys, and congregation councils to coordinate a sale. Tom is stepping down from this position as he transitions full time to living in Florida. The Sapon family cares for our synod office and grounds with love and diligence; the Cross Roads staff coordinate our youth ministry with input from the Youth Ministry Mission Team. Please join me in saying thank you to these part time contracted staff people.

Lead with Love – when we do that, it means we can enter spaces unafraid to voice our opinions knowing we will be respected and heard. When we put these words into actions it means we treat each other with dignity and follow Martin Luther's explanation to the 8th commandment – interpret each other's actions in the best possible light. When we lead with love it means we will put the needs of others before our own. This, my friends, is what it means to be a part of the NJ Synod staff. We lead with love in our daily interactions with each other and in our interactions with you –the congregations and leaders in the synod. While the number of people on staff full time has decreased over the years, the spirit of serving and joy in our work has not diminished.

Pastor Maristela Freiberg is actually an ELCA employee deployed to our synod to serve as Director of Evangelical Mission and Assistant to the Bishop. You may have worked with her in evangelism efforts, in a cohort of mission innovation, with our new starts and strategic ministries, or in a call process. Pastor Dean Brown serves as an Assistant to the Bishop and Stewardship Specialist. You may have worked with him in any number of acronyms having to do with money and generosity – CGC, BCG, EMU, or with 6 weeks on money or in a call process. Pastor Sara Lilja serves as director for our advocacy ministry LEAMNJ (Lutherans Engaging in Advocacy Ministry) and as an Assistant to the Bishop. In addition, she has been serving as interim pastor part time at Holy Communion in Berlin. You may have worked with her through one of the justice groups, in building healthy congregation relationships, on an action alert, or in a call process.

Dawn Roberts serves as Administrator for Mission and Ministry. You may have encountered Dawn as you registered for a synod event, submitted something for Jersey Jottings, or called the office on a Monday. The Assistants to the Bishop count on Dawn daily to help them get their work done. Lois Parrett serves as Accountant and Director of Operations. You may have encountered Lois in setting up a synod event, with questions about congregational finances and practices, or when calling the office on a Tuesday. Lois keeps our office running smoothly and supports the work we all do. LuAnn Barnes is my Executive Administrative Assistant. You may have encountered LuAnn when scheduling a personal appointment or congregation visit with me, with questions about parochial reports or roster status, while serving on synod council, or when calling the office on a Thursday. LuAnn is the person who enables me to do my work, keeps me pointed in the right direction, and reminds me every day that this is holy work we are called to do. Please join me in thanking our full-time synod staff.

I've clearly gone over my time but cannot end with at least showing pictures of my family. Last July, our son, Ethan Whitener married Kate Jewson in Vashon, Washington. They now live in Tacoma. Our daughter, Olivia Whitener and our son-in-law, Kurt Houwen moved to Fort Collins, Colorado – so you know how our vacation time will be spent.

In January, Dan Whitener and I joined bishops and spouses from the Northeast, along with a few people from United Lutheran Seminary, for a trip to Palestine and Israel. I had not been since Dan served his pastoral internship there in 1986-87. The situation for Palestinians is increasingly difficult even as the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land continues to provide hope and healing for its people. We are hoping to sponsor a trip in late January 2025. I show these pictures because without my family to keep me grounded, I couldn't serve in this role. They help me laugh at myself as they surround me with love.

Finally – I give thanks to God for this synod. You are witnesses to the myriad ways God's love is poured out into the world. A world hurting and broken in many ways. A world of wonder and joy. A world in need of love, sweet love. A world made better when we Lead with Love.

SHARING THE MEAL

Following the Report of the Bishop, the Assembly stood and sang *Come and Fill Our Hearts/Confitemini Domino*. The meal began with the prayers of intercession. Bishop Bartholomew, assisted by Vice President Arundel Clarke, presided at Holy Communion. The Assembly was in recess until the opening of the next session Sending Us in Love.

During the lunch recess, congregation anniversary videos were shown. We celebrate the anniversaries of St. James, Folsom (175 years), St. Mark, Hamilton (125 years), and Redeemer, Jersey City (125 years).



**THIRTY-FIFTH ASSEMBLY
NEW JERSEY SYNOD
May 13, 2023
The Grounds for Sculpture
Hamilton, New Jersey**

**SENDING US IN LOVE
1:15 PM, MAY 13, 2023**

Following the lunch recess, Bishop Bartholomew welcomed voting members and visitors back to the Sending Us in Love Session. It opened with the Assembly singing *Earth is Full of Wit and Wisdom*.

REPORT OF THE CHURCHWIDE REPRESENTATIVE

Bishop Bartholomew introduced The Rev. Amy Reumann, ELCA Senior Director for Witness in Society, for the Report of the Churchwide Representative. Pastor Reumann lifted up the Commission for a Renewed Lutheran Church and the service of Alexandra Mack, Holy Trinity, Red Bank, as a member of the commission.

Pastor Reumann gave thanks for the financial support of the Synod and the impact we make together in witness, service, advocacy, worship, planting congregations, and supporting ministries in our global outreach. Along with our mission support sharing, other financial support includes Lutheran Disaster Response, ELCA World Hunger, Global Mission, International Women Leaders, and Fund for Leaders. Pastor Reumann also gave thanks for our focus and the importance of raising up leaders for the church.

Our ministry in the world and our advocacy through LEAMNJ, under the leadership of Pastor Sara Lilja, was lifted up. With an update related to AMMPARO, ministry with asylum seekers and refugees, this ministry has now expanded from solely Central and Latin America to an ELCA global strategy.

The report concluded with the ELCA video greeting from Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. The video is available for congregation use and is posted on the NJ Synod website.

REPORT OF THE SYNOD COUNCIL (Cont'd.)

Bishop Bartholomew called on Vice President Arundel Clarke to bring the 2024 Spending Plan to the floor. There were no proposed amendments to the Spending Plan. Utilizing voting cards, the voting members adopted the 2024 Spending Plan.

**2024 Spending Plan for the New Jersey Synod
February 1, 2024 through January 31, 2025**

The proposed spending plan provides financial support for the synod's missions and objectives. This plan was developed in collaboration with the Fiscal Management, Administration and Property Committee which **recommends approval of this plan by the Synod Council.**

Income Supporting the Spending Plan

Synod income includes Mission Support from congregations, distributions from endowed funds, support from ELCA churchwide, and income from other sources.

	2022 Actual		2023 Approved Spending Plan		2024 Proposed Spending Plan	
Mission Support	1,725,271	86%	1,760,000	83%	1,700,000	82%
Restricted Fund draws		12%		16%		17%
Synod Council Deficit Reduction	-		-		-	
Restricted support for Mission Development	137,331		126,000		142,500	
OSEF support for Bishop's Office	-		100,000		100,000	
Health Benefit Assistance	-		10,000		10,000	
United Seminary Endowment support	10,000		10,000		10,000	
Endowment support for Candidacy	26,267		29,000		29,000	
Stewardship support	450		1,000		1,000	
Endowment for Staff Housing Support	-		6,000		6,000	
Endowment to Support Cross Roads	20,000		20,000		20,000	
Wurffel Administrative Support	10,000		6,700		6,700	
EMU Support	8,692		8,600		8,600	
Mission Development - Property Manager	21,397		22,000		22,000	
ELCA support to the NJ Synod		< 1%		< 1%		< 1%
ELCA support for Mission Director	10,000		10,000		10,000	
ELCA NJ Synod support	-		-		-	
Other income		1%		< 1%		< 1%
Individual Contribution Support	5,073		-		-	
Special Giving Operations Support	3,570		-		-	
Thrivent Choice	274		1,000		1,000	
Interest Income - All Banks	19,378		6,000		6,000	
Total Income	1,997,701		2,116,300		2,072,800	

Mission Support describes the gifts provided by congregations to support the work of our synod. Mission Support provided 86% of the spending plan income in 2022 and is forecast to provide 82% of income in 2024.

Restricted Fund draws describes money distributed from restricted funds to synod programs that satisfy those funds' restrictions. This income supports missions within New Jersey, the ULS seminary and pastoral candidates, Cross Roads Camp, pastor support programs, Stewardship programming, and synod property management.

Other Income is personal gifts to the synod, Thrivent Choice and bank interest. Interest income was significantly higher in 2022 because of a national increase in interest rates.

Spending Plan

Section 1: ELCA Churchwide and Ministry Partners

The New Jersey Synod supports our partners in ministry within New Jersey, throughout our region and across the churchwide organization. Half of Mission Support gifts to the synod are given to ELCA churchwide.

	2022 Actual	2023 Approved Spending Plan	2024 Proposed Spending Plan
ELCA Share of Mission Support	862,635	880,000	850,000
United Lutheran Seminary	90,000	100,000	100,000
Cross Roads Outdoor Ministries	20,000	30,000	30,000
Lutheran Archives Center	2,500	2,500	2,500
New Jersey Interfaith Coalition	500	500	500
Seafarers and International House	2,000	2,000	2,000
Diakonia	1,500	1,500	1,500
	979,135	1,016,500	986,500
Percentage of spending plan	50%	49%	48%

Partners-in-ministry include the United Lutheran Seminary and the Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center. 48% of the spending plan supports the ELCA Churchwide and Ministry Partners.

Section 2. Strengthening Congregations

This section focuses on the processes and programs that strengthen congregations' capabilities and facilitate collaborative ministry across our synod.

	2022 Actual	2023 Approved Spending Plan	2024 Proposed Spending Plan
Assistants to the Bishop and staff support	293,531	303,012	317,927
Youth Ministry program	42,742	40,500	40,500
Synod Continuing Education		2,000	2,000
Discipling and Witness Team	250	1,000	1,000
Justice and Peace Mission Teams	-	1,000	1,000
Synod Communications	5,560	9,000	9,000
Stewardship Resource Development	450	1,000	1,000
	342,533	357,512	372,427
Percentage of spending plan	17%	17%	18%

Strengthening Congregations within the New Jersey Synod includes:

- Assistants to the bishop and other personnel supporting congregational needs
- Advocacy Ministry
- Youth Ministry programs and grants
- Discipleship and Witness Mission Team
- Justice and Peace Mission Team
- Development and production of congregational Stewardship resources
- Synod-wide communications

Resources devoted to strengthening our Synod congregations make up 18% of our 2022 plan.

Section 3: Congregational Vitality

	2022 Actual	2023 Approved Spending Plan	2024 Proposed Spending Plan
New Jersey Missions	141,004	126,000	142,500
Percentage of spending plan	7%	6%	7%

Congregational Vitality enables new expressions of ministry in our Synod, assists the start-up of new missions and revitalizes existing ministries. During 2022 the synod supported Bridge of Peace in

Camden, Christus in Camden, St. Luke in Dunellen, Santa Isabel in Elizabeth, Misión Pan de Vida in Passaic, Misión Luterana Reconciliación in Pennsauken, Morning Star in Ridgefield, St Bartholomew in Trenton, and the Santa Isabel Ministry to Immigrants in Detention.

Section 4: Office of the Bishop

The Office of the Bishop supports and guides congregations and clergy, coordinates church and legal processes and nurtures synodical leadership.

	2022 Actual	2023 Approved Spending Plan	2024 Proposed Spending Plan
The Bishop and staff support	220,387	225,022	230,854
Candidacy and seminarians	26,267	29,000	29,000
Pastoral supply coordination	3,000	3,600	3,600
First Call Pastoral support	7,254	7,200	7,200
Ecumenical and interfaith programs	-	1,300	1,300
Synod ordinations and special events	1,828	3,000	3,000
Synod Assembly and Assembly reserve		12,500	12,500
	258,736	281,622	287,454
Percentage of spending plan	13%	14%	14%

The bishop’s office leads and administers:

- Congregational vacancy and call processes
- Seminarian formation and identifying clergy candidates
- Interaction and dialogue with other church and ministry partner organizations
- Gatherings such as the Synod Assembly
- Pastoral supply for congregations
- Guidance, programs and help to first-call pastors

14% of the proposed synod spending plan supports the Office of the Bishop.

Section 5: Oversight and Planning for the Sake of the Mission

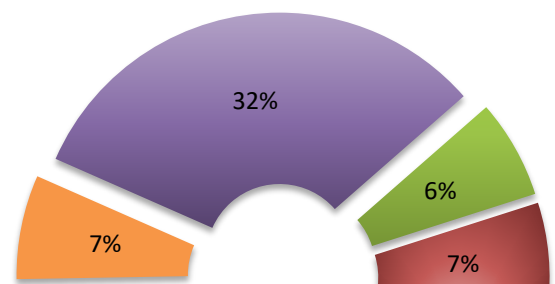
Section 5 supports the administrative aspects of running the synod organization including managing our resources and properties, fulfilling legal and regulatory requirements, and planning for our future.

	2022 Actual	2023 Approved Spending Plan	2024 Proposed Spending Plan
Staff support	93,199	95,231	113,336
Staff Travel Expenses	15,250	36,000	18,000
Volunteers Meeting & Travel	2,757	6,000	6,000
Audit, Legal and Insurance	32,873	37,000	38,000
Property management	69,084	71,300	68,300
Supplies and services	30,348	39,500	39,500
	243,511	285,031	283,136
Percentage of spending plan	12%	14%	14%

2024 Projected income



2024 Proposed expenses



The 2024 Spending Plan was ADOPTED 05/13/2023.

CROSS ROADS CAMP AND RETREAT CENTER

Helen Payanzo, Cross Roads Program Director, shared her story of being a first-time counselor at the camp and the impact the experience had on her life. The staff is preparing for another safe summer camp season and retreat ministry. Helen shared a letter received from a parent who experienced family camp, far exceeding all expectations for she and her children.

Cross Roads continues with the BTF - Bold Transformational Faith (mybtf.org) program for congregations providing distinct faith formation experiences. In closing, Helen lifted up the Cross Roads website which has information on all upcoming events as well as the social media presence on Facebook and Instagram.

Following the report, the Assembly, stood, stretched and sang *This Little Light of Mine*.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF REFERENCE AND COUNSEL

Bishop Bartholomew reported we received one late resolution, with the appropriate signatures. Bishop Bartholomew opened the floor for consideration of the late resolution.

The motion to consider the late resolution was ADOPTED 05/13/2023.

Bishop Bartholomew called on The Rev. Susan Nelson-Colaneri, Holy Trinity, Hasbrouck Heights, for the Report of Reference and Counsel.

RESOLUTION ON MENTAL HEATH - STIGMA FREE ZONE

He has told you, O mortal, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8

The 2021 ELCA social message, “The Body of Christ and Mental Illness” challenges us to create a powerful example within the whole body of Christ as we accompany and affirm those in our midst who live with mental illness.

WHEREAS, the National Institute of Mental Health reports that 1 in 4 adults experiences mental illness in a given year and 1 in 17 adults live with a serious mental illness such as schizophrenia, major depression, post-partum depression or bipolar disorder; and

WHEREAS, approximately 20% of youth ages 13 to 18 and 13% of youth ages 8 to 15 experience severe mental disorders in a given year; and

WHEREAS, Stigma is when someone, or even you yourself, views a person in a negative way just because they have a mental health condition. Some people describe stigma as a feeling of shame or judgement from someone else. Stigma can even come from an internal place, confusing *feeling* bad with *being* bad (NAMI.org); and

WHEREAS, the stigma associated with the disease of mental illness is identified as the primary reason individuals fail to seek the help they need to recover from the disease; and

WHEREAS, the Stigma-Free Campaign aims to inspire the public interest and open dialogues about stigma, raise awareness of the disease of mental illness, and create a culture wherein family, friends, neighbors, all peoples who have the disease of mental illness feel supported by their community and neighbors and feel free to seek treatment for the disease without fear of stigma; and

WHEREAS, promoting awareness that there can be no “health” without mental health will break down barriers and encourage all people to be mindful of their mental health and ask for help when needed; and

WHEREAS, local congregations can support persons with mental illness in seeking resources to treat the disease of mental illness so no one person needs to suffer alone or feel hopeless; and

WHEREAS, establishing Stigma-Free Zones will raise awareness of resources and encourage people to engage in care as soon as the need is identified so recovery can begin, hope is inspired, and tragedies are avoided; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that New Jersey Synod of the ELCA recognizes the community mental health needs and supports the efforts of all to reduce the associated stigma and shame by designating the New Jersey Synod as a Stigma-Free Zone and challenge each of the congregations and ministries of the New Jersey Synod to do likewise – to be Stigma Free.

Bishop Bartholomew opened the floor for debate of the resolution.

The Rev. Gladys Moore, Retired, Zion, Rahway, rose in favor of the resolution, and asked for clarification of “Stigma-Free Zone”. The chair directed the Assembly to NAMI.org for comprehensive information related to stigmas associated with mental illness. The Rev. Peter Hartney, St. Paul, Beachwood, and convenor of the Mental Health Justice Team, confirmed the work and resources available through NAMI.org

The Rev. Jacob Simson, St. John, Jersey City, and Howard Cornelius, Abiding Peace, Budd Lake, spoke in favor of the resolution.

In accordance with our Rules of Procedure, debate ended with no one speaking against the resolution, and three speakers heard in favor of the resolution. Bishop Bartholomew called for a vote.

(The Resolution was ADOPTED 05/13/2023)

Bishop Bartholomew thanked Reference and Counsel for their work.

LEAD WITH LOVE AS WE GO AND . . . !

Bishop Bartholomew called on The Rev. Maristela Freiberg, DEM and Assistant to the Bishop, and members of the Go . . . ! Team, who led the Assembly in conversations about evangelism outreach. Assembly participants are encouraged to share this experience in their individual places of ministry. Bishop Bartholomew thanked all for commitments to reach out to introduce more people to Jesus!

SENDING RITES

Bishop Bartholomew once again thanked the Assembly musicians for their leadership. Voting members and visitors were reminded that following the Assembly, the grounds are open until 9:00 PM. The Assembly rose and sang *Ten Thousand Reasons*.

RECOGNITION OF OUTGOING SYNOD COUNCIL MEMBERS

Bishop Bartholomew recognized and thanked the outgoing members of the Synod Council for their service:
Pastor Annemarie Cook, Pastor Raymond Kolison, Pastor Sue Jones,
Pastor Michael Linderman, and Karina Payanzo

INSTALLATION OF 2023 - 2024 NEW JERSEY SYNOD OFFICERS AND COUNCIL

Bishop Bartholomew asked the 2023 – 2024 Synod Council members who were present to come forward for the rite of installation. The Synod Council will assume responsibility for the work of the Synod in the coming year. Synod Council members for 2023 – 2024 are:

Synod Council Officers

The Rev. Tracie L. Bartholomew, Bishop
Arundel Clarke, Vice President
The Rev. Blake Scalet, Secretary
James Harris, Treasurer

Synod Council – Clergy

The Rev. Linnéa Clark
The Rev. Jose Escalera
The Rev. Lisa Holliday
The Rev. Miles Hopgood

The Rev. Gary LeCroy
The Rev. Jane McCreedy
The Rev. Nancy Nardi
The Rev. Eric Trozzo
The Rev. Pamela Werner

Synod Council-Lay

Robert Bowden
Carol Dorn
Patricia Espejo
Daniel Fields
Andrea Gerrard
Steven Hernandez

Carla Hoenigmann
Nansi Krauss
Grant Leftchak
Wannetta Phillips
Aretha Richardson
Jose Sanchez

Maurice Willoughby

Following the installation, the Assembly sang *Thank You Lord*.

BLESSING AND SENDING FOR MISSION 2022

Bishop Bartholomew asked those going on a mission trip during the summer to stand for a blessing, followed by the Assembly singing *God Is Love*.

ORDER FOR CLOSING OF THE ASSEMBLY

Bishop Bartholomew led the Assembly in an Affirmation of Christian Vocation followed by closing of the Assembly. The Thirty-fifth Annual New Jersey Synod Assembly was declared closed in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. The Assembly rose and sang *We Are Marching in the Light of God*.