



From the bishop:

“Be Bold!”

“Be Bold!” This is not only the theme for our upcoming New Jersey Synod Assembly but also a description of the way we are called to live as disciples of Jesus Christ. Throughout Scripture, God’s people are assured that God will be present as they face the joys and struggles of life. We see this as the Israelites are about to enter the promised land without Moses; we see it as the early church tries to be faithful to its calling to live in a world hostile to its proclamation.

Following Moses’ death, God tells Joshua, “Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go” (Joshua 1:9). Joshua is given a spirit of boldness and a commission to lead the Israelites into the land toward which they have been headed for 40 years. And with this God-given boldness, Joshua trusts God and leads the people forward into a new future.

In the second letter to Timothy, Paul reminds this young leader of the gift of faith he received, which includes a spirit of boldness: “I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I

remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:5-7). Paul then goes on to remind Timothy to remain faithful and strong in the faith of his ancestors at a time when many believers are quick to succumb to the despair of the world.

When I was installed as bishop, our former presiding bishop, Mark Hanson, reminded those of us gathered on that day of the ways God calls the church to act boldly, trusting that in that boldness God’s spirit is present. He went on to offer advice to this then-new bishop—pay attention to your feet and go where God’s people are. This has meant stepping into places of fear and uncertainty as well as places of joy and celebration. “Going where God’s people are” has meant taking risks and making changes so that we might better



Bishop Tracie
Bartholomew

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Synod assembly quick notes

Location: Hyatt Regency, 2 Albany St., New Brunswick, NJ 08901

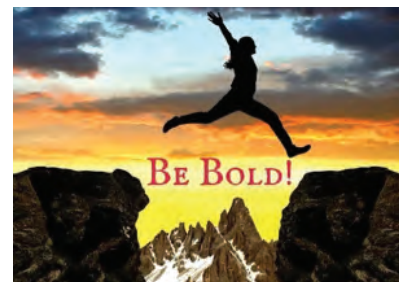
Date: June 6-8

Other dates to remember:

- May 13: Deadline for hotel reservations
- May 16: Bulletin of reports posted online at njsynod.org/assembly
- May 23: Final deadline for late registrations / banquet tickets / name changes

Elections at assembly: Bishop, vice president, secretary, youth and clergy (Synod Council)

Please keep the assembly in your prayers and visit njsynod.org/assembly for the most up-to-date assembly news. We’ll see you in New Brunswick!



Cultivating congregational vitality

We know the opportunities for God's mission in New Jersey are changing. We need to empower leadership teams to share the gospel and deepen the faith of all people in our congregations. By embodying the principles and practices of congregational development (contextual worship, discipleship/faith formation, evangelizing outreach, leadership development, stewardship/mission support, and re-rooting in the community), we can follow Jesus into the future.

The Mission Advocacy Table is currently accompanying groups of congregations (called cohorts) as they equip congregational leaders to lead boldly. By working with trainers, facilitators and coaches, the leadership teams from these congregations will engage in transformational work through prayer, worship and holy innovation.

Here is a list of what's happening in New Jersey:

Cultivating Missional Capacity (CMC) for Sustainability

This multiyear training process helps congregational teams develop the vision and leadership necessary to grow their capacity for God's mission in the world. The focus is on discipleship, stewardship, community relationships and financial development. A cohort of six congregational teams from the Shore Mission District started this process in the spring of 2018.

Congregations: St. Thomas, Brick; Holy Cross, Toms River; Holy Trinity, Manasquan; Holy Trinity, Red Bank; Reformation, West Long Branch; and King of Kings, Middletown.

Equipping for Vitality (E4V)

This multiyear journey equips congregational teams to identify their missional identity and purpose in their context. The teams are provided with training and resources to discover God's calling for them. A cohort of seven congregational teams from the Northern Mission District started this journey together in the winter of 2018.

Congregations: Prince of Peace, Old Tappan; Zion, Ridgefield; Zion, Garfield; Morning Star, Ridgefield; Holy Trinity, Nutley; Good Shepherd, Glen Rock; and Christ, Woodcliff Lake.

Mission Connectors—South Hudson Lutherans

Five congregations in Bayonne and southern Jersey City are exploring opportunities for partnership and collaboration. These South Hudson Lutherans gather for faith formation and leadership development. This year they're working to create a 20/20 vision plan about ministry collaboration and God's possibilities.

Congregations: Grace, Bayonne, and Bethany, Trinity, Redeemer and Christ Our Saviour in Jersey City.

Intentional redevelopment

The director for evangelical mission accompanies these congregations as they discern their purpose and identity and re-root in their community and in God's mission for the world.

Congregations: Christus in Camden and Epiphany in Pleasantville.

Congregations for Justice

In collaboration with our Episcopalian partners, congregational teams are exploring the biblical foundations of service and how to engage at all levels of government. The Congregations for Justice curriculum has a four-part Bible study series that explores the scriptural foundations of



service and advocacy and encourages participants to put their faith into action. Leading the team are the Rev. Sara Lilja, director of the Lutheran Episcopal Advocacy Ministry of New Jersey, and Erica Ernest, ELCA hunger advocacy fellow. At the annual justice gathering, participants are asked to come with an advocacy action plan and explore ways to implement it. This training was hosted by Trinity in Dover, St. Mark in Oaklyn and Abiding Presence in Ewing.

Lutherans in faith-based community organizing

There is an eagerness to explore more deeply the principles and practices of community organizing as a way to reclaim how public witness makes us part of the wider community. Congregations actively involved with Jersey City Together and Faith in New Jersey are part of this holy experience. Five leaders participated in the ELCA's community organizing training in January. The hope is to continue to extend training opportunities to leaders throughout community-organizing networks. The "Flames of Justice" event enables trained leaders from congregations involved with community organizing to enrich their skills and practices.

Partners for mission

Eleven congregations from the Delaware Mission District are committed to financially supporting Bridge of Peace in Camden well into the future. Current work involves deepening their relationships and helping to expand the local mission engagement of each congregation. We hope to explore a similar model for ministry with other congregations.

New Jersey Synod coaching team

Leaders cannot change and grow on their own. Seven trained coaches are available to accompany leaders and congregational teams. They are actively coaching congregational teams of CMC and E4V and are available to redevelopers. Seven more new coaches were trained in 2018 and will be available soon to counsel leaders and congregations in our synod.

Leadership for Faithful Innovation—a synod vitality strategy

The New Jersey Synod was invited to participate

in a pilot project called "Leadership for Faithful Innovation," an initiative of the Luther Seminary/Lilly Endowment Fund process. Six pastors, their congregational teams, and members of the synod staff have started a three-year journey of learning key spiritual practices while engaging with holy experimentation. They will engage in a process, consisting of five steps designed to become the practices and habits that reshape congregational life and leadership. The five steps are: listening, reconnecting, defining, reframing and cultivating. Through in-person training and bimonthly videoconference coaching, leaders will be given practices to introduce into their contexts that will help them and their communities listen more deeply to God, each other and their neighbors. Through Spirit-led relationship-building, they can define the underlying challenges facing them, reframe expectations for church membership and leadership, and cultivate new ways of being church that foster faithful innovation.

The six pastors and their congregations are:

- The Rev. Dr. Christa M. Compton, Gloria Dei, Chatham
- The Rev. Mona Fitch-Elliott, St. John, Jersey City
- The Rev. Jessica Lambert, St. Paul, Jersey City
- The Rev. Jane McCready, Faith, New Providence
- The Rev. Chelsea Miller, Good Shepherd, Somerville
- The Rev. Serena Rice, Abiding Peace, Budd Lake

We give thanks to God for congregational leaders, congregations, facilitators, trainers and coaches in our synod engaged in "Cultivating Congregational Vitality." The ultimate goals are to renew hope, strengthen congregations, explore new pathways for ministry in a changing world, and help congregations become vital, vibrant and healthy, grounded in their baptismal identity and focused on God's mission. We intend to share more about the Leadership for Faithful Innovation journey at the synod assembly.

For more information about future cohorts, contact our director for evangelical mission, the Rev. Maristela L. Freiberg, at maristela.freiberg@elca.org or 201-407-6000. 4

Register for camp at Cross Roads

There's still time to register your child and family for an amazing experience at Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center in Port Murray, whose instruction this summer is based on the theme "Transformed Community."

"God's Agent of C.H.A.N.G.E. conjures up images of a mighty band of superheroes with secret missions," explains the camp's webpage. "When we take on the mission of being God's agent of change in the world, we must be ready to be transformed—individually and together—and to discover that our not-so-secret identities will probably not conform to the world's expectations. This is not always an easy thing to say yes to, but when the mission is attempted together and in community, we discover that we are aligned with God's will, powered by God's spirit, and that there is purpose and joy in being Christ's life-giving and love-giving presence in the world as God's hands and feet."



With weeklong camps and events designed for youth from third through 12th grades, Cross Roads Camp and Retreat Center is an amazing experience right in your backyard. Through in-depth and exciting age-appropriate activities, kids discover God's love for them firsthand. Campfires, woods, a pool, low- and high-rope courses, and more provide opportunities for kids to stretch themselves in a safe and loving environment.

Visit crossroadsretreat.com/summer-programs for more information. And make plans to visit the camp's open houses on May 18 and June 1 to see how summer camp can fuel your child's faith for life. ✚

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serve together in Jesus' name. Paying attention to my feet has meant walking alongside you as you boldly serve in the places where you find yourselves every day.

I invite you to engage in a season of prayer as we anticipate gathering in assembly June 6-8. Pay attention to the places and people God puts into your life. Reflect on the faithfulness of God in your past and how God might be calling you into a bold new future. Come prepared to share how you

boldly live out your calling as a disciple of Jesus Christ. And pray for our common work:

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord (Evangelical Lutheran Worship, Evening Prayer).

—Bishop Tracie Bartholomew