



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
NEW JERSEY SYNOD
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.
1930 Highway 33, Hamilton Square, NJ 08690

Easter 2023

Dear Friends in Christ,

Following our synod council meeting last week, I was conferring with a staff member about a particularly messy situation in one of our congregations for which we had been asked for help. At the end of our conversation, the staff member said – “I’m sorry this is so messy, bishop”.

I’ve been thinking about that comment for several days as we prepare for Holy Week and Easter. Messy seems to be a quaint description of what the church has always been. That first Holy Week began with a donkey procession into a parade of palms, then moved into an upper room where Jesus and the disciples had a last meal in secret, before moving to the foot of a cross for an execution. The culmination of that first week ended in a graveyard where life was unexpectedly found, and everything began anew. To call it messy is an understatement!

We are a church borne of messiness and comprised of sinners. Our history shows us again and again that Christ is found in the midst of chaos and struggle. Christ is found where we least expect and surprises us with a word of life and grace and mercy. Christ is found leading us out of tombs of our own making into the beloved community of God’s own redeeming.

As we walk through these last days of Lent and into the glorious celebration of the resurrection, let us not be surprised by the messiness of being church together in the world, but by the ways Christ turns our messiness into something beautiful.

*All around, hope is springing up from this old ground.
Out of chaos life is being found in you.
You make beautiful things, you make beautiful things out of the dust.
You make beautiful things, you make beautiful things out of us.*

All Creation Sings #925

Serving in this holy mess with you,

Tracie L. Bartholomew

Bishop Tracie L. Bartholomew

