



OFFICE OF THE BISHOP
NEW JERSEY SYNOD
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

December 3, 2014

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness... (Mark 1:4a). So we will hear on the 2nd Sunday of Advent about John out in the wilderness where crowds will come to be baptized and confess their sins. We are the faith ancestors of those who came to see and hear this prophet who excited a forlorn and oppressed people with the news that One was coming who would be mightier and more powerful than John himself. One was coming who would baptize people on the margins, in the wilderness, and at the edges, with the Holy Spirit! We know who that One is and during Advent we await the promised return of that very Christ.

While we wait, we are not idle, however! As church for the sake of the world, we are called to love our neighbors, care for one another and proclaim the good news of God in Christ in our words and in our deeds. I know that you are doing just that in your local setting – thank you for all you do in and through the part of the world that God has entrusted to you.

I am writing to update you about our life together as synod. At our November 21-22 Synod Council retreat, we appointed Mr. James Harris to serve as our synod treasurer. Jim will come on board January 1 to begin his four-year term of office. He has served as treasurer of congregations and of a large non-profit health care system (Saint Clare's) so he has a good working knowledge of what the job will entail. He also has a wonderful sense of the mission of our synod and the ways that our finances can be a tool to serve that mission. Jim's life is in transition right now as he and his wife, Kathleen, are preparing to move to Egg Harbor City, where she has just accepted a call to serve as pastor at Zion. I know you will welcome Jim into this position.

Appointing a new treasurer means that Mr. Tom Kull will be stepping aside after more than 10 years serving in this office. Tom has done a magnificent job of managing our finances, while finding ways to fund mission initiatives that grow our capacity. Tom will serve as assistant treasurer through the 2015 synod assembly. This will allow for a smooth transition during the closing of the books, annual audit, and preparation of the 2016 spending plan for assembly. We will have time to thank Tom for his service at our assembly in Long Branch.

Speaking of our synod assembly (June 5-6), here is your advance notice that the registration fee for voting members will remain the same as last year at \$95.00 per person. Visitor fees will be \$15.00 per person. Information about hotel, assembly theme, and registration deadlines will be posted later in January.

As we walk through these Advent days, I am keenly aware of the unsettledness that surrounds us – the sad realities of racial injustice brought to light by events in Ferguson, MO, the continued hunger and food insecurity faced by millions of Americans, the anxious lives of undocumented immigrants living and working in our cities and towns, people

unable to make their rent or mortgage payments, cries of sorrow and grief for loved ones who died at the hands of violence, and the list goes on. It is precisely in the midst of this unsettledness that John proclaimed the news of hope to a people long ago. It is the same hope that we proclaim today in our prayer – ***Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come.***

Blessings to you in this season of hope.

Your sister in Christ,

Tracie L. Bartholomew

The Rev. Tracie L. Bartholomew, Bishop