



**Office of the Bishop  
New Jersey Synod, ELCA**  
*God's work. Our hands.*

September 2025

Dear New Jersey Synod,

I love the beginning of the school year. In recent days I have delighted in seeing the many pictures of kids heading off to school with beaming smiles, their dreams for the future as varied as their first-day outfits.

I've spent so many years as a teacher and a student that I carry the rhythms of the academic year in my bones. In fact, I usually make my new year's resolutions in September rather than January because that's when my optimism is often in greatest supply.

Beginnings take a lot of courage. It takes courage to gather up your supplies, strap on your backpack, and head out into a new classroom, a new grade, a new set of expectations. It takes courage to send the children we love out into a world that doesn't seem committed to protecting them. It takes courage to keep living the gospel and proclaiming in word and deed our belief that every person is a beloved child of God – no exceptions.

I have my own apprehensions as I begin this new call, where the learning curve is steep and the responsibilities feel weighty. Lately I keep returning to the words in Isaiah 43, where the Lord says: "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you. I have called you by name; you are mine." When I feel overwhelmed, I listen for the voice of the Lord calling me by name. I pray that each of you can hear that voice calling your name too.

#### Looking Back, Looking Forward

I am immensely grateful to my predecessor, the Rev. Tracie Bartholomew. She has supported me in the chaotic transitions of the summer, worked to orient me to the role of bishop, and helped me prepare for the joys and challenges of this call. Most of all, I am grateful for her wise and faithful leadership of our synod over the last twelve years. I know you will join me in praying for her as she enters a new season and enjoys some much-deserved time of renewal and rest.

I am also grateful to everyone who joined us in person or online for the installation service on August 23, as well as all those who planned and participated in the service. My friends who were in attendance (and who represent a variety of faith backgrounds) couldn't believe how inclusive and joyful the service was. I was not at all surprised to hear them rave about how welcomed they felt. After all, that grace-filled, gospel-centered hospitality is a hallmark of our synod.

As we take the first steps into this new season, I want you to know that I have assured the Assistants to the Bishop and the synod support staff that for the foreseeable future, we will leave our current team in place. My hope is to add an Assistant to the Bishop to fill the position that opened with Rev. Sara Lilja's departure. It will take some time to discern what that Assistant's portfolio will be and who might be the best fit for that role.

#### A Few Resolutions

As September begins, I have three early resolutions:

- To learn something new each day
- To pray for you and for the congregations of our synod
- To build relationships, especially with those of you I don't yet know well

Thank you for your continued prayers and for your patience as I enter into these first official days on the job. I feel buoyed by your support, and I look forward to our partnership for the sake of the gospel!

Filling my backpack,

*Christa*

Bishop Christa Compton  
ccompton@njsynod.org

